

# THE STORY OF AUDUBON

## THE NATURALIST

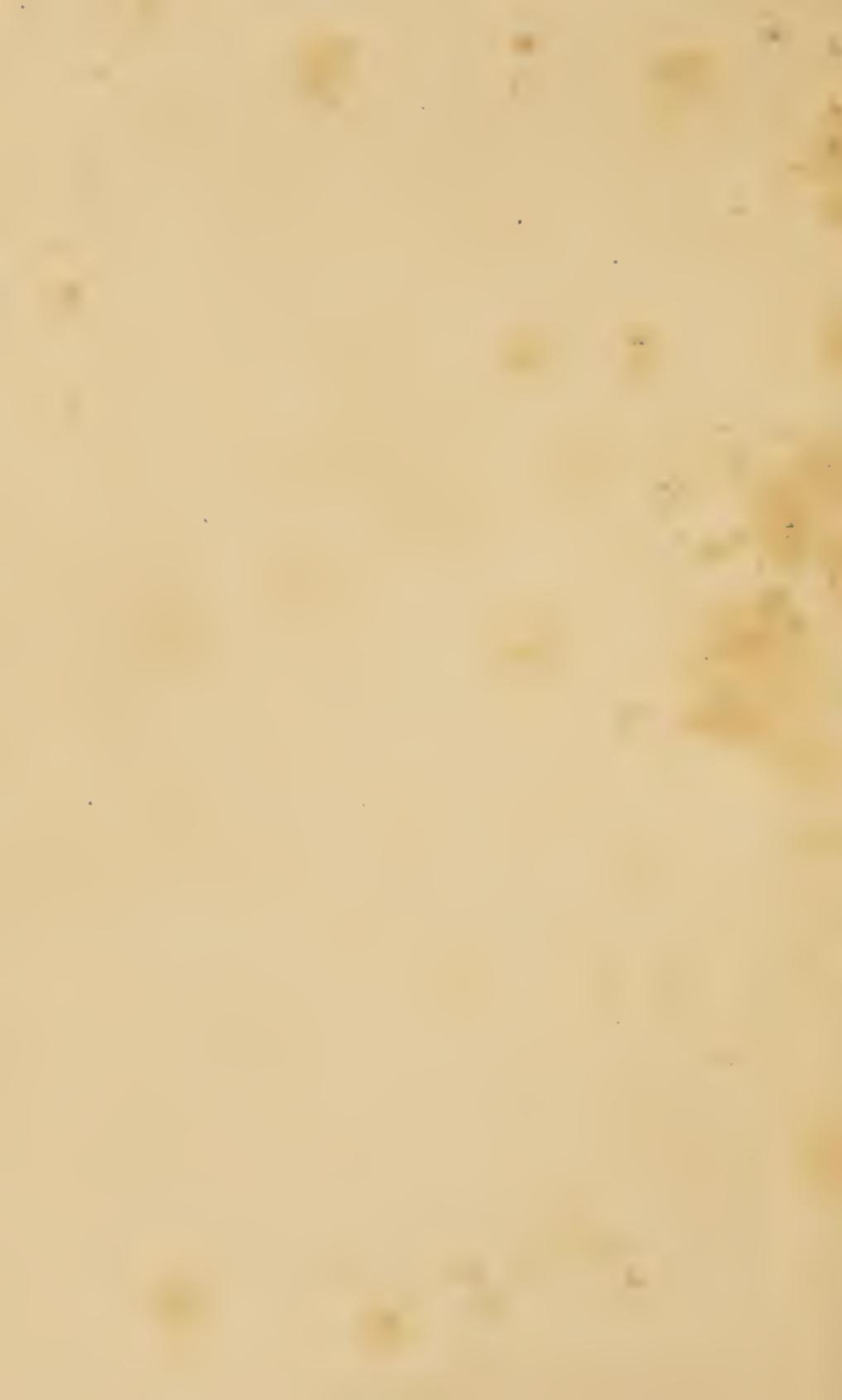
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AUDUBON'S EXPLOIT WITH A PANTHER.

THE  
STORY OF AUDUBON

*THE NATURALIST.*

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"And surely never did there live on earth  
A man of kindlier nature."

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WORDSWORTH.

London:

T. NELSON AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW.  
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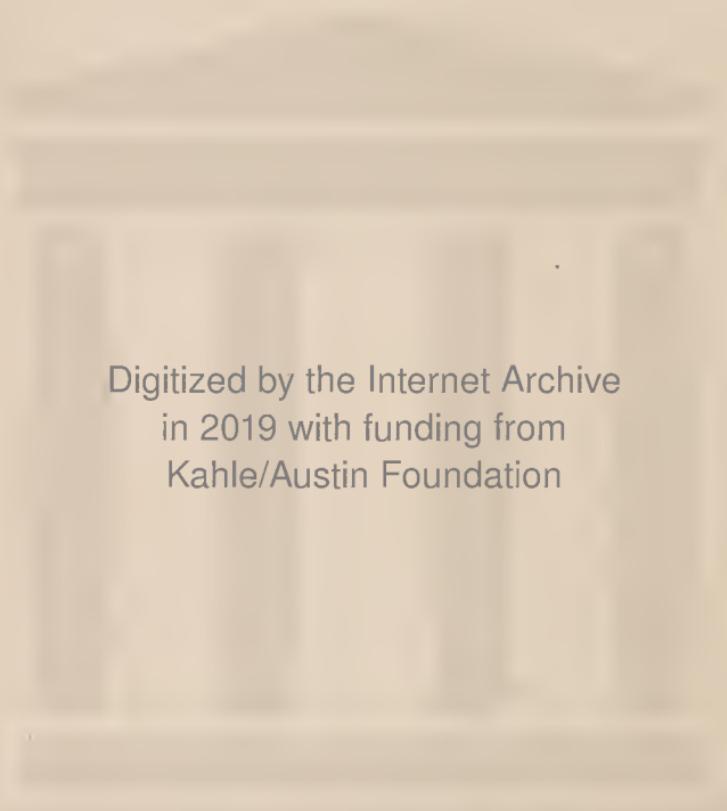
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# THE STORY OF AUDUBON.

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## Book First.

*AUDUBON'S WORK.*

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### CHAPTER I.

THE WANDERER IN THE PRAIRIE.

 AS the reader ever attempted to form a conception of the American prairies, the “boundless prairies of the Far West”?

Probably he thinks of them as of vast spaces of level, grassy pasturage, tenanted by herds of bisons, and occasionally traversed by tribes of wandering Indians.

They are something more than this. Far from being level, they are broken up into a thousand capricious undulations: here, a deep bowery

hollow ; there, a steep and romantic bluff ; here, a valley brightened by a fresh and sparkling stream ; there, a low copse of hickory or magnolia trees ; here, a bold yet graceful curve like that of the swelling wave ; there, a sudden descent like that of the cliffs on a sea-washed, iron-bound coast. And all these various forms are rendered beautiful by a wonderful copiousness of herbage and a rare abundance of wild flowers. You may journey for miles, and constantly find some new object to arrest your attention. Nature has been very bountiful to the American prairies.

If it were only to watch the constant changes of light and shade, as now a cloud trails across their surface, and now a broad golden glory of sunshine ; as they shine with an indescribable radiance at early dawn, or are lit up with myriads of strange but intense hues at sunset, or gleam like a far ocean of silver when the moon comes out in the unclouded heaven, or loom heavily with mysterious shadows what time the tempest breaks upon them with flash of lightning and peal of thunder,—if it were only to watch these surprising changes, the traveller would be well repaid for a visit to the American prairies.

But they afford material for study to the

naturalist as well as to the artist, to the geologist as well as to the botanist. They have their herds of bison and of deer, their strange colonies of cayeyutes and their communities of prairie wolves; their graceful antelopes and astute raccoons; the rabbit burrows in their sandy banks; the squirrel leaps and gambols in their coves; the panther lingers in their more remote recesses. And what shadow is this which sails along the grass? It is that of the falcon, swift of flight and fierce of heart. What rich melody is that which every echo seems to repeat with so much delight? It is that of the mocking-bird, as he warbles his love-song to his mate. Nature has been very bountiful to the American prairies.

Civilization is fast encroaching on their borders, and the steam-engine now sweeps across their wide extent. Yet still they retain their principal features in all their primal freshness, all their ancient splendour; and few districts of this wide world of ours are richer in the beautiful and the marvellous than the American prairies.

Many years ago, a solitary European was crossing that portion of the prairies which borders on the Upper Mississippi. His knapsack, his gun,

and his dog, were all his baggage and all he had for company. But he felt neither lonely nor despondent; for he was an ardent lover of Nature, and he never wearied of studying her countless aspects.

This man was an enthusiastic naturalist, and had devoted his life to the observation of the ways and habits and characters of birds. To grow better acquainted with them, he penetrated alone into the depths of the forest; he explored the dangerous recesses of the pine swamp; he wandered for days and nights over the interminable prairies; he braved the flood and the hurricane; he endured hunger and thirst and fatigue; he did not fear to encounter the wild Indian; he did not shrink from leaving behind him the habitations of men. His soul was filled with an insatiable desire of knowledge. And so it came to pass that his perseverance made him free, so to speak, of the bird-world. He became, as it were, a privileged inmate of it. He knew the haunts of the lonely eagle, the spots where the oriole loved to build her nest, the favourite resort of the horned owl. He could tell you all about the frolics and love-sports of the dainty humming-birds. He watched with keen glance the battles of the falcon and the

osprey. He knew every note and cadence in the song of the whip-poor-will. And all this knowledge he did not selfishly keep to himself, but recorded it in books for the benefit of his fellows; books of infinite freshness and astonishing interest, to which we are indebted for much of the information we possess respecting the birds of America.

Many years ago this ardent, courageous naturalist was crossing one of the wide prairies of the Mississippi, with no other company and no other baggage than his knapsack, his gun, and his dog. Though alone, he moved along slowly, like a man fearless of danger; and though he had travelled far, he was not weary, for his mind was constantly diverted by the brilliancy of the flowers which sparkled in his path, and the gambols of the fawns around their dams.

The track he followed was an old Indian trail; and as the sun sank beneath the horizon, and the deep sapphire blue of night spread over the sky, he felt some desire to reach a copse where he might take his rest until morning broke. He knew the woodland could not be far distant, for the night-hawks were skimming over and around

him, attracted by the buzzing wings of the beetles which form their food; and ever and anon the low howling of wolves echoed upon his ear.

Just as he reached the skirts of a small forest patch, he caught a gleam of firelight, and moved towards it, in full confidence that it proceeded from an Indian encampment. He was mistaken. As he drew nearer he discovered that it came from the hearth of a small log-cabin, at whose door he presently knocked.

It was opened by a woman, tall of figure and with a coarse, forbidding countenance. Her voice was unpleasant, and her attire negligently thrown about her. The wanderer inquired if he might shelter himself under her roof for the night, and received a reply in the affirmative. Accordingly he entered and took a seat by the fire. The first object that attracted his attention was a young Indian, resting his head between his hands, with his elbows on his knees. A long bow rested against the log-wall near him, while several arrows and two or three raccoon-skins lay at his feet. He was so still that he seemed scarcely to breathe. The stranger—we may as well name him; he was JOHN JAMES AUDUBON, the American ornithologist—accosted him in French. The Indian answered

by raising his head, pointing to one of his eyes with his finger, and giving an eloquent glance with the other. Audubon then observed that his face was stained with blood. The fact was, that an hour before, as he was discharging an arrow at a raccoon in the top branches of a tree, the arrow had split upon the cord, and sprung back with so much violence as completely to destroy his right eye.

After a long day's journey, Audubon felt the pangs of hunger, and asked for food. Looking around, he saw that the hut did not contain either bed or couch, but in a corner lay a pile of large bear and buffalo hides. He drew forth his watch, a very handsome chronometer, and told the woman that it was late, and as he was fatigued, he would be glad to retire to rest.

She caught sight of the watch, and was evidently struck by its costliness. She told Audubon that there was a liberal supply of venison and jerked buffalo meat, and that, if he removed the wood-ashes, he would find a cake. Then she asked permission to look at the watch, which Audubon incautiously placed in her hands. She was all excitement; loudly extolled its beauty; and twisted its rich gold chain round her own

“brawny neck,” observing how happy she should be in the possession of such a treasure.

Thoughtless, and deeming himself in so remote a spot entirely secure, Audubon paid little attention to her talk or her movements, but addressed himself to the task of feeding his dog, and satisfying an appetite sharpened by a day’s exertions.

At this moment the Indian youth rose from his seat, as if suffering extreme pain. He passed and repassed Audubon several times, and once pinched him in the side so sharply as nearly to extort a cry of indignant anger. Audubon looked at him reprovingly, but met a glance so forbidding that it thrilled him with alarm, in spite of his natural composure. The Indian then reseated himself, drew his butcher’s-knife from its greasy sheath, felt its edge, as you might do that of a razor which you suspected to be dull, returned it, filled his pipe with tobacco, and threw expressive glances at the stranger whenever the crone who acted as hostess had turned her back or was not regarding them.

Audubon now began to feel that danger threatened him; but he understood from the Indian’s eloquent signs that whatever enemies he might

be called upon to encounter, the Indian would not be one of them.

He asked the woman for his watch, and wound it up. On the plea that he wished to see what weather might be looked for on the morrow, he walked out of the cabin, carrying with him his trusty gun. He loaded each barrel carefully, looked to the flints, and returning to the hut, reported favourably of his observations. Heaping together a few bear-skins, he made himself a comfortable couch ; called his faithful dog to his side, and lay down with his gun close to his right arm. In a few minutes, to all appearance, he was fast asleep.

It may very well be that he did doze a little. If so, he was quickly wakened by the sound of voices ; and from the corner of his eyes—to use his own quaint expression—he saw two athletic youths glide into the hut, carrying a dead stag on a pole. They disposed of their burden, asked for whisky, and drank of it freely. Observing Audubon and the wounded Indian, they roughly inquired who the stranger was, and why “that rascal,” the Indian, was in the house. Their mother, for so she proved to be, endeavoured to silence them, informed them of Audubon’s val-

able watch, and drew them aside to a corner, where the three engaged in an eager conversation, the purport of which Audubon could easily conjecture. He patted his dog fondly. The faithful animal—and what animal so faithful as a dog?—

“In life the firmest friend,  
The first to welcome, foremost to defend;  
Whose honest heart is still his master’s own,  
Who labours, fights, lives, breathes for him alone,”—

moved his tail, and Audubon saw with indescribable pleasure his fine eyes alternately fixed on him and on the whispering trio in the corner. It was clear that his instinct warned him of coming peril.

The lads, however, drank so boisterously, that Audubon felt they would soon be in a helpless condition of intoxication; and the old crone in like manner had such frequent recourse to the whisky bottle, that for once it seemed probable drink would save a life, as a counterpoise to the many it has destroyed. But consider the astonishment and the horror of Audubon when he saw her seize a large carving-knife, and proceed to the grindstone for the purpose of whetting its edge. He watched her pour water on the revolving machine, and work away with the murderous weapon, until, in spite of his resolute determina-

tion of spirit, the cold sweat covered every part of his body. Her task finished, she returned to her reeling sons, and cried : "There, that will soon settle him ! Boys, kill the fellow, and then for the watch."

Audubon turned, cocked his gun-locks silently, touched his trusty companion, and held himself ready to start up and shoot the first who might attempt his life. The moment fast approached, and that night might have been stained with a fearful tragedy but for a providential interposition. Just as the old woman stepped forward, and her sons prepared to consummate their crime, the door of the cabin suddenly opened, and two stout travellers entered, each with a rifle on his shoulder !

Conceive the surprise and delight of Audubon ! He sprang to his feet ; he welcomed them heartily ; he grasped them by the hand ; and with rapid utterance told them how opportune was their arrival, and how near he had been to his death. Never was tale less time in telling ! The drunken sons were then secured, and the woman, notwithstanding her oaths and protestations, shared the same fate. Great was the joy of the Indian youth, who gave the three white men to understand that, as pain prevented him from sleeping,

he would act as sentinel. But they slept much less than they talked. Day came, and with it the punishment of the captives, who were marched off into the neighbouring woods, while their cabin and all that it contained were burned to ashes.

Such was one of the adventures which befell Audubon in his eager pursuit of knowledge. Let us now glance at a few of those Birds of the Prairies whose habits he so delighted to study, and we shall then be able to judge of the nature of the attraction which beguiled him so far from the securities of civilization, and rendered him comparatively insensible to hardship and danger.

The *Great-footed Hawk*, or *Peregrine Falcon*,\* is a noble bird. It is somewhat heavy in appearance, but compact and firmly built, and very muscular, with keen bright eyes and powerful talons. The colour of its plumage differs according to its years, and varies in different individuals from the deepest chocolate-brown to light gray. So firm is its grasp, that if hit while perched on a tree, and not shot quite dead, it will cling to the branch until life has departed.

The flight of the falcon is synonymous with

\* *Falco peregrinus.*

speed. You seldom see it sailing steadily through the air, as the eagle does, unless when it has failed to secure the prey it has been pursuing ; and even then it rises merely with a broad spiral wheel, to gain a sufficient elevation from which it may survey the scene below. It then gives utterance to a loud, shrill cry, and away it darts in quest of a victim. When one is sighted it redoubles the rapid motions of its pinions, and chases the poor trembling fugitive with almost incredible rapidity. It turns, and winds, and springs, and dives in a surprising manner. All the exertions of its victim are useless. When within a few feet of it, the falcon extends its powerful legs and talons to their full extent. For a moment those great broad wings are closed ! The next instant it clutches its prize, which, if too heavy to be borne off directly, it drives obliquely towards the ground, sometimes a hundred yards from the spot where it was seized, to kill it and devour it.

The favourite food of the great-footed hawk are ducks, hens, mallards, and other water-fowl ; but it will also feed upon dead fish.

It is a solitary bird—as are almost all the hawks—and is seldom seen with a mate, except during

the breeding season. It roosts in the hollows of trees, or builds a rude nest on rocky ledges,—always choosing the most remote and inaccessible localities.

From this emblem of rapine and cruelty we will turn to a more pleasing picture, symbolical of pure affection—the *Turtle-Dove*.\*

On yonder leafy bush, which you see enriched with a profuse garniture of white blossoms, a loving pair have made their nest. Look at the female, as she patiently broods upon her eggs, embosomed among the thick foliage, receiving food from the bill of her attentive mate, and listening, well pleased, to his assurances of devoted love. Can you conceive of a happier couple? Is not the sight one which might inspire a poet's song?

Now look you at the branch above. There we see the first scene of a love-dream. The female seems doubtful of the truthfulness of her lover, and has retired to the furthest spray, with wings and tail already opening, preparatory to her flight to some more secluded recess, whither her lover will pursue her, and where, perhaps, he

\* *Columba Carolinensis*.

will succeed in convincing her of his fidelity. This is a pastoral idyll at which we are assisting ; we recognize the “touch of nature” which connects ourselves with the bird-world.

The dove is the harbinger of spring, and her soft and plaintive cooing may well induce us to forget the bitter winds and cloudy skies and wrathful voices of winter. A happier time is at hand : the time of bloom and blossom, of splendour in the grass and glory in the flower ; the time of sweet sounds and delicate airs ; the time of all that is young and fresh and lovely. “The voice of the turtle is heard in the land,” and every heart rejoices ; for along with it comes the resurrection of nature, the budding forth of a new life ; along with it come

“Soft subtle scents of sweet flowers blossoming,  
The smell of rainy fields in early spring,  
The song of thrushes, and the glimmering  
Of rain-drenched leaves by sudden sun made bright,”

quick delightful changes of sunshine and shadow, smiles and tears, dearer far to the poet’s heart than all the uniform splendour of the summer or the full maturity of autumn.

The flight of the turtle-dove is exceedingly swift

and long maintained. Whenever it starts from a tree or the ground, on being suddenly disturbed, its wings produce a strange whistling noise, which is audible at a considerable distance. On such occasions it turns and doubles in the air, as if to test the strength and capability of its pinions. It seldom rises to any great height above the trees, and as seldom passes through the deep shadows of the woods or forests ; preferring to hover, as it were, upon their threshold, or to fly about the balmy hedgerows and the sunny fields. Yet, during spring, and more particularly while the female is sitting on her eggs, the male rises as if about to emulate the lark in his upward flight, and flaps his wings with a persistent motion ; but suddenly he drops, sweeping round in a considerable circle with wings and tail expanded, until he once more alights on the tree where his mate reposes, or in close vicinity to it. These graceful devices are frequently repeated during the period of incubation.

The migrations of the turtle-dove are not so extensive as those of the wild pigeon, nor are they undertaken in such astonishing numbers, more than two hundred or two hundred and fifty doves seldom being seen in one flock.

On the ground, along the fences, or on the branches of trees, our delicate bird walks with singular ease and gracefulness, frequently jerking its tail in a fitful but not inelegant manner. It runs with some swiftness when searching for food in places where food is scarce. It does not often bathe ; and it drinks by swallowing long draughts of water with its bill deeply immersed, sometimes up to the eyes.

The female lays two eggs of a pure white colour, partially translucent. The nest is loosely made of a few dry twigs in any kind of tree. Their favourite roosting-places are among the long rank grasses which grow in neglected fields, at the foot of dry stalks of maize, or on the edges of meadows ; though the birds not infrequently resort to the dead foliage of trees, as well as that of different species of evergreens.

But what delightful music is this which now thrills through the sunlit air ? In its sweetness it rivals the melody of a flute, and its exquisite modulations and cadences seem to show that the instrument is touched by no unskilful hand. Surely it is the quintessence of all the finest love-songs ever dreamed by the heart of poet ! Now it breathes a plaintive and imploring strain ;

now it swells into a full jubilant burst ; now we catch the mournful voice of regret ; and now the spirit of truth and constancy inspires the measure. What a wonderful compass of light and shade ! And what masterly execution ! The most difficult cadences are accomplished with the utmost ease ; the most graceful tunes are performed with unerring certainty.

Who is the musician ? No other than the *Mocking - Bird*,\* the most consummate of all Nature's songsters, the finest musician of the bird-world, the “ king of song.”

Where the great magnolia rears its lofty trunk, crowned with a canopy of ever-green foliage, and adorned with a thousand beautiful flowers which make the air faint with subtle odours ; where the groves and gardens glow with the golden orange, whose fruits shine through the verdurous alleys like globes of light ; where bignonias profusely interlace their climbing stems around the white-blossomed stuartia, and, mounting higher and higher, enwreathe the crests of the tallest trees ; where innumerable vines festoon the foliage of the magnificent woods, and bestow on the passing breeze a slight portion of the perfume of their

\* *Turdus polyglottus*.

clustered flowers ; where the forest and the field are decked out with blossoms of every hue, as if Nature were celebrating one long bridal-feast ; where the balmy atmosphere is instinct with genial warmth and delicious fragrance ; where fruits and berries of all descriptions are met with at every step ;—it is there, in the favoured plains and valleys of Louisiana, that the mocking-bird has fixed his abode, and it is there he pours forth his richest songs.

See how he wheels around and about his mate, with motions light as those of a butterfly ! His tail is widely expanded ; he mounts a short distance in the air ; he describes a short, swift circle ; again alights, and approaches his beloved one, his eyes gleaming with ecstasy, for she has already promised to be his, and his only. His beautiful wings are gently raised ; he bows before his love with courtly grace ; and again soaring upwards, opens his bill, and pours forth his melody, full of exultation at the conquest he has made. He soars higher and higher, glancing quickly around with watchful eye, as if to assure himself that his bliss has no spectator. Then he literally *dances* through the air ; and after a few minutes' silence begins his song anew, imitating

with the most wonderful exactness all the notes which Nature has imparted to the other minstrels of the bird-world. The lark, the nightingale, the thrush, the song-sparrow,—he reproduces the strains of each with a faithfulness which deceives the experienced ear. You think that all these feathered songsters are hovering round you. Not so ; you hear but one, you see but one,—he is a host in himself, for he is the mocking-bird.

For awhile, says Audubon, in his “Ornithological Biography,” each long day and pleasant night are thus spent ; but at a peculiar note of the female, her mate ceases his song and attends to her wishes. A nest is to be prepared, and the choice of a place in which to build it becomes a matter for mutual consideration. The loving pair inspect the pear-tree, the fig-tree, the orange-tree ; they also visit the thick patches of sweet brier. They all appear well suited for their purpose ; and so well does the bird know that he has little to fear from man, that, instead of retiring from him, they finally decide to fix their abode in his vicinity, perhaps in the tree nearest to his window. Dry twigs, leaves, grasses, cotton, flax, and other substances, are carefully collected, carried to a forked branch, and there arranged. The female has laid

an egg, and her mate redoubles his attentions. In due time five eggs are deposited; when the male, having little more to do than sing his spouse to repose, attunes his pipe anew. Every now and then he descries an insect on the ground, which he knows his beloved one will regard as a "dainty dish." He drops upon it, takes it in his bill, beats it against the earth, and flies back to the nest to feed her, and receive her thanks.

When a fortnight has elapsed, the young brood demand all the care and attention of their parents. No felonious cat, no vile snake, no dreaded hawk is likely to visit their habitation. Indeed, we may well suppose that by this time the inhabitants of the *next house* have become quite attached to the lovely pair of mocking-birds, and take a pleasure in ensuring their safety. The dewberries from the fields, and many kinds of fruit from the gardens, mixed with insects, supply the young as well as their parents with food. The brood is soon seen emerging from the nest, and in another fortnight, being able to fly with vigour, and to provide for their own maintenance, they take leave of the parent birds.

It is in the beginning of April—sometimes a fortnight earlier—that the mocking-birds pair,

and address themselves to the task of nest-building. They are by no means skilful architects, and their nest cannot compare with that of the goldfinch, or even with that of the wren. It is coarsely constructed on the outside, with dried sticks of briars, withered leaves, and grasses, mixed with wool. Internally it is lined with fibrous roots in a circular form, very carelessly arranged.

The female lays from four to six eggs the first time; four or five the next; and when—which is seldom the case—a third brood occurs, three or four, of which, as a rule, two only are hatched. The eggs are of a short oval form, light green, blotched and spotted with amber.

According to Audubon, the nearer you approach to the seashore, the more plentiful are the mocking-birds. They are naturally fond of loose sands, and of districts which are sparsely wooded, and covered with patches of brier and clumps of low bushes.

During incubation, the female pays such exact attention to the position in which her eggs are placed, when she flies to a short distance for exercise and refreshment, to pick up gravel, or roll herself in the dust, that, on her return, should she

find that any of them have been disturbed or touched by the hand of man, she breathes a low mournful note as a call to her mate. Immediately he returns; she informs him of what has happened, and both condole together. It has been said that on such occasions the female abandons her nest, but this appears to be incorrect. On the contrary, her assiduity and care increase; she scarcely leaves the nest for a moment; nor does she ever forsake it until she has been repeatedly driven from the beloved spot, and sorely alarmed by frequent intrusions.

Several species of snakes ascend to the nest, and generally suck the eggs or devour the young; but whenever an assailant presents itself, not only the birds to which the nest belongs, but all the mocking-birds in the vicinity, hasten to the spot, boldly confront the intruder, and in some cases are fortunate enough to compel its retreat or deprive it of life. Cats which prowl about the fields in a half-wild state are more dangerous enemies, for they frequently approach the nest unnoticed, and at a bound secure the mother, or destroy the eggs or young, and overturn the nest.

Few hawks attack the mocking-birds, as, on

their approach, however sudden it may be, our chivalrous songsters are ready not only to defend themselves vigorously and with really splendid courage, but even to meet the aggressor half-way, and compel him to abandon his intention. The only hawk that occasionally surprises them is the *Falco Stanleii*, which flies low with astonishing swiftness, and carries the bird off, apparently without checking its flight. But if the brigand should miss its prey, the mocking-bird in turn becomes the assailant, and pursues the hawk with great bravery, summoning, in the meantime, all the birds of its species to its assistance ! And although the marauder soon out-distances them, the alarm created by their cries, which are caught up and repeated by all the birds in the vicinity, just as the watchword passes along a line of sentinels, effectually prevents him from succeeding in his felonious designs.

Not less courageous in defence of its home and its brood is the beautiful *Purple Martin*.\* It will attack and pursue every species of hawk, crow, or vulture, and so harass and discommode even the eagle by its incessant pursuits, that the latter

\* *Hirundo purpurea*.

is glad to quit the neighbourhood of its persevering little enemy.

The purple martin is likewise exceedingly tenacious of what it considers its rights ; and having once built its nest, can with difficulty be driven from it. Of this characteristic Audubon supplies a striking illustration.

“ I had a large and commodious house,” he says, “ built and fixed on a pole, for the reception of martins, in an inclosure near my house, where for some years several pairs had reared their young. One winter I also put up several small boxes, with a view to invite blue-birds to build nests in them. The martins arrived in the spring, and imagining these smaller apartments more agreeable than their own mansion, took possession of them, after forcing the lovely blue-birds from their abode. I witnessed the different conflicts, and observed that one of the blue-birds was possessed of as much courage as his antagonist, for it was only in consequence of the more powerful blows of the martin that he gave up his house, in which a nest was nearly finished ; and he continued on all occasions to annoy the usurper as much as lay in his power. The martin showed his head at the entrance, and merely retorted with

accents of exultation and insult. I thought fit to interfere, mounted the tree on the trunk of which the blue-bird's box was fastened, caught the martin, and clipp'd his tail with seissors, in the hope that such mortifying punishment might prove effectual in indueing him to remove to his own teneinent. No sueh thing ; for no sooner had I launehed him into the air, than he at once rushed baek to the box. I again eaught him, and clipped the tip of each wing in sueh a manner that he still eould fly sufficiently well to proeure food, and oncee more set him at liberty. The desired effect, how-ever, was not produeed ; and as I saw the pertinacious martin keep the box in spite of all my wishes that he should give it up, I seized him in anger, and disposed of him in such a way that he never returned to the neighbourhood."

The martins visit the Southern States of North Ameriea in the middle of spring, and quit them towards the end of August. The migrations of all birds form an interesting subject of study for the naturalist, and those of the martins are by no means to be earelessly regarded. They exhibit no ordinary degree of sagacity, intelligence, instinct, or whatever else we choose to call the per-eceptive faculty of the bird. Prior to their annual

exodus, they assemble, in parties of from fifty to a hundred, about the spires of the churches in cities, or on the branches of the trees in the country ; and for some days they are seen to make occasional sorties, uttering a general cry, and keeping in a westerly direction, and flying with great swiftness for several hundred yards, when they suddenly halt in their career, and sail back easily and slowly to their original point of departure. It may be that these essays are made for the purpose of exercising themselves, or to ascertain the course they should take, and to make the necessary preparations for enabling the party to undergo the fatigues of their long journey. Meantime, they carefully dress and oil their feathers, and cleanse their skin from the vermin which infest them. They remain on their roosts exposed to the night air, as if to fortify their bodies against all possible trials ; and they do not quit them next morning until the sun is high above the horizon, but continue to plume themselves with wonderful assiduity. At length, one day, at early dawn, when the sky is clear and the wind not too powerful, they start with one accord, and disappear in the blue distance of the south-west.

The remarkable power of flight which these birds

possess is best ascertained during these migrations, and especially if they happen to encounter a violent storm. They meet the wind, and slide, as it were, along its edges, apparently determined not to lose one inch of the space they have already gained. The foremost confront the storm with unquailing steadfastness, ascending or plunging along the skirts of the contending currents, and bravely penetrating into their whirl and eddy, as if resolute to force a passage; while the main body follow behind, gathered up into such compact battalions that to the spectator only a small black cloud is visible. Not a voice is heard, not a solitary cry or twitter; but no sooner have they made their way beyond the current than they relax their efforts, refresh themselves with a moment's pause, and break forth into one loud murmur of mutual congratulation.

But swift, and graceful, and facile as is the flight of the purple martin, it may not be compared in speed to that of the barn swallow. The martin, however, can outstrip any bird not of its own genus. It shows much dexterity in bathing and drinking while on the wing, when hovering above a large lake or river; giving a sudden motion to the hind part of the body as it touches

the surface of the water, and then rising and shaking itself like a dog, until it is enveloped in a cloud of spray.

When intending to drink, it sails close to the water, with both wings considerably raised, so as to form a very acute angle with each other. In this position it lowers the head, dipping the bill several times very quickly, and at each dip swallowing a little water.

Though the note of the martin cannot be described as melodious, it is very pleasing. It mingles with the first sounds of morning, and its cheerful freshness is very grateful to the ear. One could almost fancy that the bird rejoiced in the return of light and day, in the departure of the shadow and the gloom, and hastened to offer its humble tribute of thanksgiving to Him who is to the soul, as the sun is to the material world, the source of all happiness and the fountain of all light !

## CHAPTER II.

### THE MISSISSIPPI.

HERE can be no doubt that Audubon was admirably fitted by nature to act as a pioneer of Science. He was fond of adventure, desirous of change, with much of the old nomadic instinct in him. As Mr. Buchanan remarks, the man's heart was restless ; otherwise he would never have achieved so much. It was a burning passion with him to wander, to vagabondize, and to acquire ; he could not sit at home “i' the chimney corner.” Moreover, he was inspired with a passionate love of Nature. He never wearied of contemplating her many phases, the numerous aspects—all strange, and beautiful, and marvellous—under which she presents herself to her votary. For Nature is like a modest virgin, whose perfect comeliness and purity are known only to her lover. She does not unveil

her charms to the ignorant, or indifferent, or profane. But from men like Audubon, with warm hearts and intense sympathies, she conceals nothing. He was worthy of her gracious bounty, his admiration was so profound and so intelligent. Whether in the murmurous depths of the pine-forest, or watching the roll and rush of the tawny Mississippi, or listening to the mysterious voices of the sea as its waves come up from the nether world, or contemplating the deep azure of the cloudless skies, or the magical glow of the sunset, or from some elevated height gazing entranced on the many-coloured picture of plain and valley, of grove and glen, Audubon was still the enthusiast and the student. His intellect appreciated the combinations before him, his soul acknowledged their beauty, and he turned with a cry of thanksgiving towards Him who hath so wonderfully ordered this visible world.

To this deep love of Nature, and his quick sympathy with all he saw and heard, is due the remarkable freshness of his descriptions. His sketches of the scenery through which his endless wanderings carried him are as correct in outline and as warm with colour as if they were landscapes painted by some famous master. Much

of the charm of his books arises from the eloquent pictures which in this way relieve and brighten his ornithological narratives. Their vividness of presentment is, indeed, astonishing: we see what Audubon saw, and can realize in a moment every feature of the scene which his pen describes with such singular accuracy as well as evident enjoyment.

Let us now accompany him in a visit to the Mississippi, the majestic "Father of Rivers," the grandest river of the New World. The reader must remember, however, that the date of his visit is 1808, and that the ascent and descent of the stream is now accomplished in steam-boats, which render its navigation comparatively easy.

But in the time we speak of, it was navigated principally in the direction of the current, in small canoes, pirogues, keel-boats, flat boats, or barges. The canoes and pirogues, being generally laden with furs from the different heads of streams that feed the mighty river, were worth little after reaching the market of New Orleans, and seldom reascended, their owners making their way home through the mazes of the forests, amidst innumerable difficulties. The flat boats were broken up and used as firewood. The keel-boats and

barques were employed in the conveyance of produce of different kinds besides furs, such as lead, flour, pork, and other articles. These returned with cargoes of sugar, coffee, and “dry goods” suited for the markets of St. Geneviève and St. Louis, on the Upper Mississippi; or branched off and ascended the Ohio to the foot of the Falls, near Louisville in Kentucky.

The labour, and even peril, of the navigation was extreme, for the current is of immense power, and the channel intersected by thousands of sand-banks, liable, like the shifting muddy shores, to constant changes and shiftings; while countless trees, torn from their native soil by the whirl and eddy of the waters, still further increased the perplexities of the voyager.

A keel-boat was generally manned by ten hands, principally French Canadians, and a patroon or master. Their average burthen was between twenty and thirty tons. The barges frequently carried a crew of forty or fifty men, with a patroon; and could carry a cargo of fifty to sixty tons. Both were provided with a mast, a square sail, and coils of cordage, known by the name of *cordelles*. Each boat or barge carried a supply of provisions.

We shall suppose one of these craft under

weigh, and that, having passed Natchez, it has entered upon the real difficulties of the homeward voyage.

Wherever a point of land projects, so as to render the course or "bend" below it of some magnitude, the voyager finds an eddy, whose returning current is sometimes as strong as that in the centre of the majestic stream.

The bargemen, therefore, row close up under the bank, and merely keep watch in the bow, lest their craft should run against a submerged log or trunk of a tree, popularly known as "a sawyer" or "planter." Having reached the point, they see that the current is, to all appearance, of double strength, and that it runs right against them. After resting a few minutes, the men are ordered to their posts, and to lay hold of their oars, for the river must be crossed, on account of the impossibility of doubling such a point and keeping along the same shore.

And see! the boat is crossing, its head slanting to the current, and the rowers putting forth all the strength of their brawny shoulders and muscular arms. But the stream is too strong for them; and when they gain the opposite bank, they discover that they have drifted down fully

a quarter of a mile. By this time they are completely spent, and so, as it is now noon, they moor their craft to the shore or to a tree. Each man receives a small glass of whisky, and cooks and eats his dinner; after which they sleep or rest for an hour, and then recommence their arduous toil.

Once more the boat slowly advances against the stream. It has reached the lower extremity of a long sand-bar, along whose edge it is propelled by means of stout poles, if the bottom be hard. Two men called bowsmen remain at the prow, to assist, in concert with the steersman, in managing the boat, and keep its head right against the current. The others station themselves on the land-side of the vessel's footway, thrust their poles into the ground, lean on them with their shoulders, and push with all their might. As each man reaches the stern, he crosses to the other side, runs along it, and comes again to the landward side of the bow, when he resumes operations. With all this severe exertion the boat does not make more than a mile an hour.

But at length the bar is passed! The shore for some distance now is straight on both sides

of the river ; and, as the current flows with uniform strength, the poles are laid aside, the men are equally divided, and those on the river-side take to their oars, while those on the land-side lay hold of the overhanging branches of the trees, and thus assist in propelling their little craft. Here and there, however, the trunk of a fallen tree, partly lying on the bank, and partly projecting into the waters, impedes their progress, and requires to be doubled. This is done by striking it with the iron points of the poles and gaff-hooks.

It is now sunset : the shadows of night are slowly gathering ; the day's work is over ; and the boat lies-to in the best harbour within reach. The weary navigators proceed to cook their supper ; and, having duly satisfied their labour-sharpened appetites, they retire, well-pleased, to their blankets or bear-skins to rest ; or kindle a large fire, under whose dense cloud of smoke they repose, to protect themselves from the persecutions of the myriads of mosquitoes which, during the summer, swarm along the river. Perhaps, from dawn to sunset, the boat has advanced fifteen miles. If so, it has done well.

Morning comes, and brings with it a favour-

able wind. "All hands set sail!" The large sheet of canvas spreads to the breeze; the boat ascends with an easy motion, and, if no accident occurs, accomplishes before evening thirty or forty, or it may be even sixty, miles.

But the day following wears a very different aspect. The wind blows right ahead; the dreary shores are without a tree; and the canes on the banks are so thick and stout that the men cannot land to tow their craft with the cordelles. What must be, must be: a halt is made. The time, however, is not wholly lost, as most of the men, being equipped with rifles, betake themselves to the woods, and hunt after the deer, the bears, or the turkeys which generally abound in their leafy recesses. Three days may pass before the wind changes, and the advantages gained on the previous auspicious day are almost wasted. Again the boat moves ahead. In passing over a shallow she runs on a log, swings with the current, but hangs fast, with her lee-side almost under water. Now for the poles! All hands are on deck, bustling and pushing. At length, towards sunset, the boat is once more afloat, and after awhile is again rowed ashore, where the weary but not disheartened crew pass another night.

But the navigation of the Mississippi is now, as in Audubon's time, not infrequently interrupted by the occurrence of a great flood, or overflow of the waters. If we consider the vast area of country through which an inland navigation is afforded by the wide-spread net-work of streams which feed this wonderful river, we can easily understand that, after heavy rains, its volume will be swollen to an enormous magnitude, and that the accumulated mass will burst the borders of its ordinary channel. To the heavy rains another cause must be added,—the sudden melting of the snows on the mountains. It sometimes happens that the winter gives way before a sudden increase of temperature, when the piled-up snows melt simultaneously over the whole country; and the south-eastern wind, which then usually blows, brings along with it a continued fall of heavy rain, which, mingling with the dissolving snow, deluges the low alluvial districts of the west, and fills to brimming the rivulets, creeks, and minor rivers. These delivering their tribute to the all-absorbing Mississippi, it is not surprising that the latter should swell to a wonderful height, and overflow its muddy banks. At the foot of the Falls of the Ohio,

the water has been known to rise upwards of sixty feet above its lowest level. The river, at this point, has already run a course of nearly seven hundred miles, from its origin at Pittsburg in Pennsylvania, receiving in its course the waters of its numerous tributaries, overflowing all the "bottom lands" or valleys, and sweeping along with its turbid flood trees, cattle, fences, and even houses. Its wild career is marked by every sign of desolation and ruin.

The overflow is, as Audubon says, astonishing. No sooner has the water reached the upper part of the banks, than it rushes out and overspreads the whole area of the neighbouring swamps, which resemble a tawny ocean overgrown with colossal forest-trees. So sudden is the calamity, that every individual, whether man or beast, is called upon to exert his utmost ingenuity to effect his escape from the onrushing flood. The Indian betakes himself to the hills of the interior; the cattle and game swim to those scattered patches or islets which the rolling waters have left uncovered, or struggle with the whirl and turmoil until they perish from fatigue. Along the river-banks the inhabitants have rafts ready made, on which they embark themselves, their

flocks and herds, their provisions and goods. These they make fast to the larger and stronger trees, and remain thus anchored, while they contemplate the melancholy yet majestic spectacle presented by the swelling current, with its dark, swollen, foamy billows, as it carries off their houses and timber-yards piece by piece. These "squatters," as they are called, who have nothing to lose, seize the opportunity to paddle through the woods in their canoes, for the purpose of procuring game, and more particularly the skins of deer, bears, and other animals, which may be converted into money.

Onward rolls the river, an emblem of uncontrolled Might, a terrible example of the evil wrought by the forces of Nature when they escape from the domination of Man. Yet it is not all evil. No large vessel, unless propelled by steam, can make head against the rush of the tide; but it is covered with small boats, heavily laden, which, putting out from all the smaller streams, float silently towards New Orleans, borne along with wonderful ease and rapidity. Yet the waters abound in yellow foam and pumice—the latter having floated from the Rocky Mountains of the north-west. Larger

and more powerful become the eddies. Here and there considerable tracts of forest are undermined, the trees gradually giving way, and crashing headlong into the stream. Cattle, horses, bears, and deer attempt to breast the boiling, swirling mass of muddy waves ; while ever and anon you see a vulture or an eagle perched on a swollen carcass, and rending it in fragments, utterly regardless of the din and wild motion around it, for it knows that its strong pinions will soon take it out of danger.

When the flood has at length subsided, it is interesting to trace the mighty changes it has wrought. The wild waters have been swallowed up in the distant ocean, and everywhere the earth is covered by a deep deposit of muddy loam, which, when it dries, gapes in numerous narrow but profound fissures, until it assumes the appearance of net-work ; and from which, as the weather grows warmer, disagreeable, and at times noxious, exhalations are given forth, which fill the atmosphere with a dense fog. The river-banks have almost everywhere been broken down in a greater or less degree. Large streams now roll their miry waters where, formerly, not a rill

was visible, having cut themselves a deep channel from the upper springs and sources. These, in the language of the prairies, are known as *short-cuts*. The more elevated parts of the islands are crowned with a natural *abattis*, or rampart, consisting of an enormous mass of drifted trees of all kinds which have been accumulated there. Large sand-banks have been swept away by the irresistible onrush, and removed to other points. The trees on either shore have been torn up by the roots, except some of the oldest and strongest. Others, which have partly defied the action of the torrent, now bend over the stream like the grounded arms of an overwhelmed legion of giants. Everywhere you hear the lamentations of the farmer and the planter, while their labourers and themselves are busily employed in repairing the damage wrought by the flood. At yonder crevasse they sink an old dismantled barge or keel-boat, to fill up the passage opened by the rushing waters, until new earth can be brought and deposited in the chasm. The squatter, shouldering his rifle, makes his way across the morass, in search of his lost herds, to drive the survivors home, and recover the skins of the drowned. New fences must everywhere be

erected ; even new houses, which, to avoid a similar disaster, the settler is careful to build on an elevated platform, supported by pillars roughly hewn out of the trunks of trees. The land is ploughed anew, and, should the season be not too far advanced, will yet recompense the farmer with a good crop of potatoes and corn. But the sanguine expectations of the planter are all blighted. The traveller is impeded in his journey, the smaller streams and creeks having broken up their banks, and diverted their channels, and obstructed the familiar track. A sand-bank, apparently solid and secure, suddenly yields beneath the traveller's horse, and the next moment the animal is deeply embedded, either to the chest in front, or over the crupper behind, leaving its rider in no enviable position.

Unlike the mountain-torrents and small rivers in other regions of the world, the Mississippi,—owing, of course, to its extent and breadth,—rises but slowly during these floods, continuing for several weeks to increase at the rate of about an inch daily. When at its height, it undergoes little fluctuation for some days, and then begins to subside as slowly as it rose. The usual duration of a flood is from four to six weeks, al-

though, in some years, it is protracted over a couple of months.

We know how important a part is played in the systems of the geologist by the action of water. And certainly Audubon is right in his remark that, if the rivers and streams of the Old Continent afford illustrations of the formation of strata, much more so must the Mississippi, with its ever-shifting sand-banks, its crumbling shores, its enormous masses of drift timber (the source of future beds of coal), its extensive and varied alluvial deposits, and its mighty volume of waters rolling sullenly along, like the flood of Eternity.

The noblest of the birds of the Mississippi valley is, unquestionably, the *White-headed Eagle*,\* which the American Republic has adopted for its national emblem, and blazoned upon its illustrious flag. "The Bird of Freedom," it is figuratively called by the American poets; and who can doubt that it is now the symbol of a State whose members enjoy all the privileges of independence?

The great strength, the daring, and the cool

\* *Falco leucocephalus*.

courage of the white-headed eagle, joined to his unrivalled powers of flight, render him highly conspicuous among his brethren ; and did he add to these high qualities a generous disposition, we might congratulate the United States on their emblem without any feeling of reserve. But he lacks that noblest accompaniment of power—a regard for the rights of others ; and exhibits a tyrannical, a ferocious, and an overbearing temper.

Let us suppose that we are gently floating down the broad waters of the Mississippi, while the incoming winter brings to its basin and its more genial climate myriads of water-fowl, on whistling wings, from the icy regions of the north. Do you not see yonder eagle, perched, in an erect, defiant attitude, on the topmost bough of the tallest tree which grows beside the margin of the rolling waters ?

“ His stern but brilliant eyes survey the vast expanse.”

He listens attentively to every sound that comes to his quick ear from afar, glancing now and then on the earth beneath, for fear the light-footed fawn may hasten by unheard. His mate is similarly posted on the opposite bank, and occasionally warns him by a sharp, quick cry to

continue patient. At the well-known call he partly opens his ample wings, inclines his body slightly downwards, and gives utterance to a strange unearthly laugh. The next moment he resumes his erect attitude, and again silence reigns around.

Ducks of many species, teal, widgeon, mallard, all are seen passing with great rapidity, and swimming with the current. But the eagle heeds them not ; for the present they are beneath his attention. Hark ! do you not hear the wild, ringing notes of a trumpet ? It is the voice of a distant but approaching swan. A shriek from the female eagle echoes across the stream. Her mate suddenly shakes the whole of his body, and with a few touches of his bill, aided by the action of his articular muscles, arranges his plumage in an instant. The snow-white bird, the favoured bird of Juno, now comes in sight, flying with her long and graceful neck stretched forward, and her bright eye on the watch, as vigilant as that of her enemy ; her large wings, though they flap incessantly, seem scarcely able to support the burden of her body. Nearer and nearer she approaches, unconscious, as yet, that the eagle has marked her for his prey. But now, as she sweeps by the

dreaded pair, he starts from his perch with an awful scream, glides through the air like a falling star, and with a lightning-flash swoops down upon the startled quarry, which seeks, in the agony of its despair, by various manœuvres to elude the grasp of those cruel, those formidable talons.

Poor swan! She mounts, she doubles, and would dive deep into the stream, were it not that her assailant, prepared for a stratagem by which his prey would undoubtedly escape him, forces her to remain in the air by attempting to strike her with his talons from beneath. She soon abandons all thought, all hope of escape. She has already become much weakened, and her heart fails her as she recognizes the courage and swiftness of her adversary. She is on the point of breathing her last sigh, when the fierce eagle smites the under side of her wing, and with irresistible power drives her downward in an oblique direction upon the nearest shore.

Then may you see the cruel spirit of this insatiable enemy of the feathered race, while exulting over his victim, he for the first time breathes at ease. He presses down his powerful feet, and thrusts his keen claws deeper than ever into the heart of the dying swan. He shrieks with de-

light as he feels her last convulsions. Meanwhile, the female has watched every movement of her mate; and if she did not assist him in capturing the swan, it was not, we may well believe, from any want of will, but because she knew the strength and courage of her lord could successfully cope with even a more powerful prey. She now sails to the spot where he eagerly awaits her; and on her arrival the two together turn upwards the crimsoned breast of the unfortunate swan, and enjoy their savage feast.

During spring and summer, however, to procure his food, the white-headed eagle adopts a different course, and one much less suited to a bird apparently so well able to supply himself without seizing on the booty of other plunderers. No sooner does the fish-hawk make its appearance along the Atlantic shore, or ascend the great rivers of America, than the eagle follows it, and, like a selfish tyrant, robs it of the hard-earned fruits of its labour. Perched on some lofty crag, in view of the crested ocean or of some river-mouth, he closely watches every motion of the osprey while on the wing; and no sooner does the latter rise from the water with a fish in its grasp, than he

sallies forth in pursuit. He soon mounts above the fish-hawk, which, in mortal dread of its truculent oppressor, hastily drops its prey. In an instant the eagle, exactly calculating the rapid descent of the fish, closes his wings, follows it with the swiftness of thought, and intercepts it before it falls into the sea ; then he carries off his prize in silence to his eyrie, and assists in feeding his ever hungry brood.

The flight of the white-headed eagle is strong, generally uniform, and can be protracted to any distance at the pleasure of the bird. In its airy course it is entirely supported by equal and easy flappings, without let or pause ; but when looking for prey, it sails with extended wings, at right angles to its body, now and then allowing its legs to hang at their full length. While sailing, it has the power of soaring upwards in broad circular sweeps, without a single flap of the wings, or any apparent movement either of them or the tail ; and thus it often rises until completely out of sight. At other times it rises only a few hundred feet in the air, and darts off rapidly in a direct line. Again, when thus elevated, it partially closes its wings, and glides downwards for a considerable space, when, as if foiled or struck by

some sudden change of purpose, all at once it checks its career, and resumes its former steady flight. When so high in the air that it seems to be nothing more than a black speck on the cloudless blue, it folds in its mighty pinions, and sheers through the infinite space with so headlong a speed as to cause a loud rustling sound, like the harsh murmur of the woods when a violent gust of wind sweeps through the intertwined boughs. Its fall towards the earth on such occasions can scarcely be measured by the eye ; and this the more particularly that it usually takes place when least expected.

The white-headed eagle seldom appears in very mountainous districts, but frequents the low lands of the sea-shore, the margin of the larger lakes, and the banks of the great rivers. Its nest is usually placed on a lofty tree, destitute of branches to a considerable height, but by no means always a dead one. It is never seen on rocks. It is composed of sticks, from three to five feet in length, large clods of turf, rank weeds, and Spanish moss in abundance, if that material should happen to be at hand. When finished, it measures from five to six feet in diameter—and the accumulation of materials is so great, that it sometimes measures

as much in depth ; for the same birds occupy it in successive years, and every season it undergoes enlargement. If situated in a naked tree, between the forks of the branches, it is conspicuous from a considerable distance. The eggs, which are from two to four, are of a dull white colour, and equally rounded at both ends—some of them being occasionally granulated.

The parent birds display a very warm affection towards their young while the latter are of a small size, and to ascend to the nest at such a time is a perilous enterprise. But as the brood grow older, and are able to take wing and provide for themselves, if so inclined, the old birds roughly and promptly expel them, and beat them away from the nest. They return thither to roost, however, or else they sleep on the neighbouring branches for some weeks afterwards.

An agreeable contrast to this rapacious bird is afforded by the *American Goldfinch*,\* which Audubon describes with evident pleasure.

In its flight it resembles our British warbler, sweeping onwards in deep bold curves, and alternately rising and falling after each propelling

\* *Fringilla tristis*.

motion of the wings ; and in describing each of these curves it utters two or three notes while ascending, such as its European relative uses on similar occasions. In this manner its flight is prolonged to considerable distances, and frequently it moves in a circling direction before alighting. Their migration is performed during the day. They do not often descend to the ground, except to procure water, in which they bathe with much pleasure and brisk hilarity, picking up afterwards a few particles of gravel or sand. So partial are they to each other's society, that a company of them passing on the wing will change their course at the summons of a solitary goldfinch perched upon a tree. This summons is very emphatically uttered, the bird prolonging its usual note with little modulation, and as the party approaches erecting its body, and moving it to the right and left, apparently from a fond desire to exhibit the elegance of its manners and the beauty of its lemon-coloured plumage. No sooner have its visitors alighted than the whole company plume themselves, and then combine in a choral musical performance of great sweetness.

Its nest, like that of our own goldfinch, is composed externally of various lichens glued together

by saliva, and lined internally by down, hair, or the softest moss. It is small, and a marvel of ingenuity. Generally its little architects fix it upon a branch of the Lombardy poplar, securing it sometimes to one side of a twig only. The female deposits from four to six eggs, which are white, tinted with a soft blush-rose hue, and marked at the lower end with reddish-brown spots. The young are domesticated with their parents for a considerable time, are fed from the mouth, like canaries, and gradually learn the art of self-support. If the mother is disturbed during incubation, she glides away to a neighbouring tree, and moving her body to the right and left, as if on a pivot, summons her faithful mate. He speedily makes his appearance, passes and re-passes on the wing at a respectful distance from the intruder, in deeper curves than usual; and when the unwelcome visitant has departed, sings aloud a strain of rejoicing, and, accompanied by the female, gladly returns to the well-loved nest, the home and centre of so much innocent pleasure.

Audubon notices an interesting trait of intelligence in this beautiful bird, and in the purple-fin. When a goldfinch perches on a twig treacherously coated with birdlime for the purpose

of ensnaring it, no sooner does it discover the nature of the substance, than it throws itself backwards, with closed wings, and hangs in this position until the birdlime has run out in the form of a slender thread, considerably below the twig. Feeling then a certain degree of security, it beats its wings and flies off, with a firm resolve, we doubt not, never to alight in such a place again ; “For I have observed,” adds Audubon, “gold-finches that had escaped from me in this manner, when about to alight on any twig, whether smeared with birdlime or not, flutter over it, as if to assure themselves of its being safe for them to perch upon it.”

## CHAPTER III.

### AN ADVENTURE.

HE career of so enthusiastic and adventurous a naturalist as Audubon was frequently marked, as the reader will imagine, by incidents of a disagreeable character. We record at some length the following, because it pleasantly illustrates the self-reliance, perseverance, and geniality of the man whose life presents a valuable example of how much may be accomplished for ourselves and others by energetic and well-directed efforts.

His money was one day stolen from him, by a person who perhaps imagined that such dross could be of no value to a student of Nature. The theft took place on the shores of Upper Canada, but was as skilfully managed as if it had been planned and executed in New York, Paris, or London. Audubon bore the loss with fortitude.

To have repined, he says, when the thing could not be helped, would not have been acting manfully. He therefore bade his companion keep a good heart, and place his trust in Providence. Their whole amount of cash not exceeding seven dollars and a half, we may admit that the opportunity was favourable to a trial of faith.

However, they had fortunately paid their money for their passage across the lake: they duly embarked, and soon made the mouth of Presque-Isle Harbour, though they could not pass the bar on account of a violent gale which broke out just as they approached it. The anchor was dropped, and they remained on board during the night, feeling at times a not unnatural regret at their carelessness in losing their money. How long they might have lain at anchor Audubon professes himself unable to conjecture, had not Providence come to their aid. Through some inexplicable circumstance, Captain Judd, of the U.S. Navy, who seems to have been in command at Presque-Isle, despatched a gig, with six men, to their relief.

“It was on the 29th of August 1820,” says Audubon, “and never shall I forget that morning. My drawings were put into the boat with

the greatest care. We shifted into it, and seated ourselves according to directions politely given us. Our brave fellows pulled hard, and every moment brought us nearer to the American shore. I leaped upon it with elated heart. My drawings were safely landed, and for anything else I cared little at the moment. I searched in vain for the officer of our navy, to whom I still feel grateful, and gave one of our dollars to the sailors to drink the ‘freedom of the waters;’ after which we betook ourselves to a humble inn to procure bread and milk, and consider how we were to proceed.”

Their luggage being rather heavy, they hired a cart, at an expense of five dollars, to take it to Meadville. They themselves walked the whole distance, through a continuous downpour of rain. At night—it was Sunday night—they halted at a house belonging to their conductor’s father. The good folks, when they arrived, had not returned from a distant meeting-house, the “grandmother” being the only individual about the premises. However, she was a host in herself; a lively, cheerful dame, who bestirred herself as actively as age would permit, kindled a large fire to dry their wet garments, and placed on the

table a thrice-bountiful supply of home-baked bread and new milk.

Fatigued with the day's journey, they expressed a wish to retire to rest, and were shown into a room containing several beds. Audubon told the good grandam that he would paint her portrait the next morning for the sake of her children. He and his companion soon betook themselves to their respective couches, and fell fast asleep, and in that state of happy forgetfulness would probably have remained until morning, had they not been aroused by a light, carried by three young damsels, who, having taken note where the guests lay, blew it out, and slipped into a bed opposite theirs. As they had not spoken, probably the girls supposed them to be sound asleep, and accordingly, without let or hindrance, they chatted pleasantly among themselves, saying how delighted they would be to have their own portraits taken as well as that of their grandmother. Audubon's generous heart immediately responded to their desire, and at length all fell asleep, and the house was silent.

Day dawned, and as Audubon and his companion dressed, they discovered they were alone in the apartment, the good country girls having

arisen and departed without waking or disturbing them. They joined the family, and received a cordial morning welcome. Audubon announced his intention of painting the portraits of young and old ; whereupon the three rural graces disappeared, quickly to return attired in all the splendour of their Sunday garb. The black chalk—for Audubon drew with crayons—was soon at work, to their great delight ; and as the savoury smell of the breakfast meantime greeted Audubon's "sensitive nose," it may be supposed that he lost no time over his canvas. The sketches were soon finished, and a hearty appetite and good digestion soon made an end of the breakfast. Audubon then played a few airs on the flageolet while the guide was putting the horses to the cart, and by ten o'clock they were once more on the road to Meadville.

They enjoyed their journey. The country through which they passed was covered with glorious trees, principally evergreens—the pine and cucumber trees being loaded with brilliant fruits, and the spruces throwing a cool shade over the land which harmonized admirably with the other details of the picture. At length they came in sight of a stream called French Creek, and

soon afterwards they reached Meadville. Here they paid the five dollars promised to their conductor, who instantly faced about, whipped up his nags, bade them adieu, and trotted away home.

Audubon and his friend found themselves now reduced to the small sum of one hundred and fifty cents (not quite seven shillings). They sought out a small inn, called the "Traveller's Rest," and deposited their luggage under its roof; after which they started on an exploring expedition through the village. Its appearance was dull and dreary; but, "thanks to God," says Audubon, "I have never despaired while rambling thus for the sole purpose of admiring his grand and beautiful works." With his portfolio under his arm, and a few credentials in his pocket, he walked up Main Street, looking to right and left with careful observation, and examining every face he met with, until at last he fixed his eyes on a gentleman "in a store" who seemed a possible patron. Audubon asked his permission to sit down and rest awhile. This granted, he prudently kept silence until the owner of the store asked him what was "in that portfolio." The three words sounded auspiciously, and im-

mediately the artist revealed its contents. The store-owner proved to be a Hollander, who complimented Audubon warmly on his admirable drawings of birds and flowers. Showing him a sketch of a friend, Audubon asked him if he would like a portrait of himself in the same style. He not only answered in the affirmative, but promised to exert himself to procure Audubon a number of patrons. You may be sure that the artist thanked him heartily, and appointing the next morning for "a sitting," he returned to the "Traveller's Rest" with a blithe heart.

As soon as day dawned, our enthusiastic lover of Nature was up and away for a ramble in the woods; after which he breakfasted, and at ten o'clock repaired to keep his appointment. He thus describes the interior of the store:—

"See me," he says, "ascending a crazy flight of steps, from the back part of a store-room into a large garret extending over the store and counting-room, and mark me looking round to see how the light could be stopped from obtruding on me through no fewer than four windows facing each other at right angles. Then follow me scrutinizing the corners, and finding in one a cat nursing her young among a heap of rags intended for the

paper-mill. Two hogsheads filled with oats, a parcel of Dutch toys carelessly thrown on the floor, a large drum and a bassoon in another part, fur caps hanging along the wall, and the portable bed of the merchant's clerk swinging like a hammock near the centre, together with some rolls of leather, make up the picture. I saw all this at a glance, and closing the extra windows with blankets, I soon procured a *painter's light*.

“A young gentleman sat, to try my skill. I finished his phiz, which was approved of. The merchant then took the chair, and I had the good fortune to please him also. The room became crowded with the gentry of the village. Some laughed, while others expressed their wonder; but my work went on notwithstanding the observations that were made. My sitter invited me to spend the evening with him, which I did, and joined him in some music on the flute and violin. .... The following day was spent much in the same manner. I felt highly gratified that from under my gray coat my talents had made their way; and I was pleased to discover that industry and moderate abilities prove at least as valuable as first-rate talents without the former of these qualities.”

We trust that, in this respect, the example of Audubon will not be lost upon our young readers, and that they will always bear in mind the great truth, that Industry is the golden key which unlocks the gates of Fortune to the youthful adventurer. Without it he can do nothing ; without it, his life-failure will be complete and melancholy, even though he were as richly gifted as one of those wonderful princes of whom we read in fairy tales ! The world knows of no other magic than that which is wrought by a pure heart, a clear intellect, and a resolute will.

## CHAPTER IV.

### AN EXPLOIT WITH A PANTHER.

T will interest the reader, probably, if we record another of the stirring incidents which befell Audubon in his search after knowledge.

In that part of the great State of Mississippi which lies in what used to be the Choctaw territory, existed, in the days of our naturalist, an immense swamp, which, beginning on the borders of the Mississippi, near the mouth of the Vanconnaal Creek, followed the windings of the Yazoo River as far as its point of confluence with the stream named Cold Water River.

While exploring this swamp in order to study its natural productions, he fell in with a squatter, who informed him that his herd of hogs had lately been diminished by the depredations of a *painter*, as he called the animal—that is, a pan-

ther or cougar—and who lamented bitterly over the ravages it had committed. Audubon immediately offered to assist him in destroying the enemy. His offer was accepted, and the squatter set to work to collect as many of his neighbours as possible, in order that the expedition might prove a success.

A group of hunters, one fine morning, accordingly assembled at the door of the squatter's cabin, just as the sun, in all its glory, rose above the radiant horizon. They were five in number, mounted on swift and sturdy nags, and accompanied by a pack of large and ugly, but strong-limbed dogs. The squatter and Audubon were soon ready, and being joined by the sons of the former, the merry company started.

Few words were spoken until they reached the edge of the swamp. It was then agreed that all should disperse, and seek for the panther's track, with the understanding that he who discovered it should blow his horn, and remain on the spot until his companions could come up.

In less than an hour the sharp notes of the horn awoke every neighbouring echo; and, led by the squatter, the hunters galloped through the well-wooded glades, guided by the occasional call

of the distant huntsman. Having reached the rendezvous, the best dog was sent forward to follow up the panther's trail, and in a few moments the whole pack might be seen spreading over the interior of the swamp. Every man then looked to his rifle, and the party followed the dogs, at separate distances, but in sight of each other, determined to shoot at no other game than the panther.

The dogs soon opened mouth, and suddenly quickened their pace. Audubon's companion concluded that the beast had been hunted out, and the hunters all put their horses to the gallop. The barking of the dogs increased, when, all at once, they altered its character, and the squatter urged Audubon to push on, informing him that the panther was *treed*,—that is, had clambered on the low branch of a large tree to rest for a few moments; and that, if they did not succeed in shooting him while thus situated, their chase would be a long one. As they approached the spot they gradually drew together, but on seeing the dogs at the foot of a large tree, again dispersed, and galloped off to surround it.

Each hunter now moved with stealthy wariness, holding his rifle ready, and allowing the bridle to

hang loose on his horse's neck, as it trotted slowly towards the yelping, barking pack. A shot from one of the party was heard, and immediately the panther leaped to the ground, and bounded off with such swiftness as to show he was by no means disposed to become the target of half a score of experienced marksmen. Away the dogs started in pursuit, the woods ringing with their deafening cry. The hunter who had fired rode up, and said his ball had hit the monster, and had probably broken one of his fore-legs near the shoulder, the only place at which he could aim. A slight trail of blood was discovered on the soil; but the hounds sped onwards at such a rate that the huntsmen could not tarry to examine it, but, putting spurs to their horses, galloped towards the centre of the swamp. One bayou, or creek, was crossed, and then another, still larger and more muddy; but the dogs still kept ahead, and as the horses began to pant furiously, the hunters thought it advisable to dismount and press forward on foot.

Now, kind reader, says Audubon, follow the group marching through the swamp, wading across miry pools, and stumbling, as best they may, over fallen trunks, and among the intertwined rushes

which occasionally covered whole acres of ground. "If you are a hunter yourself, all this will appear nothing to you; but if crowded assemblies of 'beauty and fashion,' or the quiet enjoyment of your 'pleasure grounds,' alone delight you, I must mend my pen before I attempt to give you an idea of the pleasure felt on such an expedition."

After marching for two hours more, they again heard the dogs. "On coming up to them," says Audubon, "we discovered the ferocious animal lying across a large branch, close to the trunk of a cotton-wood tree. His broad breast lay towards us. His eyes were at one time bent on us, and again on the dogs beneath and around him. One of his fore-legs hung loosely by his side, and he lay crouched, with his ears lowered close to his head, as if he thought he might remain undiscovered. Three balls were fired at him, at a given signal, on which he sprang a few feet from the branch and tumbled headlong to the ground. Attacked on all sides by the enraged curs, the infuriated cougar fought with desperate valour; but the squatter advancing in front of the party, and almost in the midst of the dogs, shot him immediately behind and beneath the left shoulder. The cougar writhed for a moment in agony, and in another lay dead."

## CHAPTER V.

### THE HUMMING-BIRDS.

**B**EFORE we conclude these brief sketches of Audubon's manifold experiences as a persevering naturalist, we feel bound to introduce our readers to his glowing account of the habits and character of the Humming-birds,—those delicate winged jewels, those living gems, those darlings of the sunshine and the summer, whose study seems to have afforded him, as it has afforded so many earnest lovers of Nature, the purest and most exquisite delight.

Where is the person, he exclaims, who, on seeing this lovely little creature,—he is speaking of the *Ruby-throated Humming-bird*,\*—moving on humming winglets through the air, suspended as if by magic in it, flitting from one flower to another, with motions as graceful as they are

\* *Trochilus columbris.*

light and airy, pursuing its course over our extensive continent, and yielding new delights wherever it is seen,—where is the person who, on observing this glittering fragment of the rainbow, would not pause, admire, and instantly turn his mind with reverence toward the Almighty Creator, the wonders of whose hand we at every step discover, and of whose sublime conceptions we everywhere observe the manifestations in His admirable system of creation ? There breathes not such a person, so kindly have we all been blessed with that intuition and noble feeling—admiration !

When spring returns with its brightness, its balm, and its blossoms, and earth opens its broad bosom to the glory of the genial sun, you may see the tiny jewel-bird advancing on fairy wings, carefully visiting each slowly-opening flower-cup, and, like a curious florist, removing from each the injurious insects, that otherwise would speedily mar its consummate beauty.

Poised in the warm, blue air, like a brilliant gem, you see it peeping cautiously, and with bright keen eye, into the innermost recess of each “honied blossom ;” while the swift, light movements of its gauzy pinions seem to cool and fan

the flower, without doing harm to its delicate texture, and produce a low, sweet murmur which deserves to be classed among the most melodious and enchanting of Nature's voices.

And now, observe : with its long, delicate bill it penetrates the chalice of the flower, and the protruded, double-tubed tongue, gifted with the finest sensibility, and coated with a viscous substance, touches each insect in succession, and draws it from its place of concealment, to be swallowed immediately. All this, we need hardly say, is accomplished in a moment ; and the bird, as it quits the flower, sips so tiny a draught of its honied store, that the theft may fitly be regarded as the recompense the little plunderer deserves for its campaign against the insect host.

The broad prairies, the meadows, the fruitful orchards, the blooming gardens, the cool, leafy forest bowers—all are visited in their turn by the radiant pilgrim, who everywhere meets with both sustenance and pleasure. Its gorgeous throat, in beauty and brilliancy, is quite unrivalled. Now it glows like a furnace fire ; now it darkens into the deepest velvety black. The upper surface of its delicate body shines of a resplendent shifting green ; and it darts through the air with an

almost inconceivable swiftness and vivacity. It hovers from one blossom to another like a flash of light ; now upwards, now downwards, now to the right, now to the left.

“I wish it were in my power,” says Audubon, “to impart to you, kind reader, the pleasure which I have felt while watching the movements and viewing the manifestations of feelings displayed by a single pair of these most favourite little creatures, when engaged in the demonstration of their love to each other : how the male swells his plumage and throat, and, dancing on the wing, whirls around the delicate female ; how quickly he dives towards a flower, and returns with a loaded bill, which he offers to her to whom alone he feels desirous of being united ; how full of ecstasy he seems to be when his caresses are kindly received ; how his little wings fan her, as they fan the flowers, and he transfers to her bill the insect and the honey which he has procured with a view to please her ; how these attentions are received with apparent satisfaction ; how, soon after, the blissful compact is sealed ; how, then, the courage and care of the male are redoubled ; how he even dares to give chase to the tyrant fly-catcher, and hurries the blue-bird and the mar-

tin to their boxes ; and how, on sounding pinions, he joyously returns to the side of his lovely mate. Reader, all these proofs of the sincerity, fidelity, and courage with which the male assures his mate of the care he will take of her while sitting on her nest, may be seen, and have been seen, but cannot be portrayed or described."

The velocity with which these tiny birds rise into the air, and dart out of sight and hearing, is something wonderful. They do not alight on the ground, but perch upon twigs and sprays and branches, where they move sideways in graceful measured steps, frequently expanding and closing their wings, and pluming and cleansing their brilliant attire with as much care as if they were—perhaps they are—conscious of its beauty. They have a peculiar habit of spreading one wing at a time, and passing each of the quill feathers through their bill in its whole length. If they do this when the sun is shining, the wing glitters like a piece of transparent gauze. They start from their perch instantaneously, and without the slightest difficulty. Apparently their powers of vision are considerable ; for they make towards a martin or a blue-bird when it is sixty or seventy yards distant, and surprise it while it is as yet unaware

of their approach. Pugnacious and courageous, they do not shrink from attacking the largest birds ; while they themselves seem to have few enemies, except the larger kinds of humble-bees,—whose demonstrations, however, they seldom notice, their superiority of wing being sufficient to carry them away from these slow-moving insects in the short space of a minute.

The nest of the humming-bird is a fairy edifice. Its external parts are formed of a light gray lichen, found on the branches of trees or decayed fences, which is woven so dexterously about the whole nest, as well as to some distance from the spot where it is attached, as to seem a portion of the branch or stem itself. Internally the nest is lined with a layer of a soft cottony substance, and delicate silken fibres ; and on this yielding elastic couch the female deposits a couple of eggs, almost oval in shape, and white as snow. Ten days are required for their hatching, and two broods are raised in a season. The young in about a week are ready to take wing, but are fed by the parents for five or six days longer.

The humming-bird shows no disposition to avoid the neighbourhood of man. It frequently approaches flowers placed in the windows of

houses, or even enters rooms when the windows are kept open during the extreme heat of the day, and returns, if not molested, so long as the flowers preserve their bloom. It lives upon insects, which it catches chiefly in the calices of the flowers, and partly on the wing. The nectar or honey which it sips is inadequate to its sustenance, and is probably taken only to quench its thirst.

## Book Second.

*AUDUBON'S LIFE.*

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### CHAPTER I.

EARLY YEARS, MARRIAGE, AND COMMERCIAL  
SPECULATIONS.

 JOHN JAMES AUDUBON was born in Louisiana. While yet a child he removed with his parents to San Domingo, where he resided for a brief period, previous to his departure for France.

His home in France was fixed at Nantes. Here he spent a very happy childhood, under the fostering care of a step-mother, who was all that step-mothers are popularly supposed *not* to be. Then came a time, however, when it was necessary that his education should begin. For music-master he had a skilful professional, who taught him to play with taste and effect on the violin,

flute, flageolet, and guitar. His drawing-master was David, a wild, revolutionary artist, whose genius has triumphed over his signal defects of style. He also made good progress in graver studies—mathematics, geography, history.

At an early age his love of Nature manifested itself. Equipped with a haversack of provisions, he would make frequent excursions into the country, returning loaded with natural curiosities—birds' nests, birds' eggs, wild flowers, rare mosses, and the like. He also began to draw sketches of the birds of France—a task which he carried on with so much enthusiasm that he completed no fewer than two hundred specimens.

Having attained to manhood, his father sent him to America to take the management of some properties he possessed there. He took up his residence at Mill Grove, on the Perkiominy Creek, where he formed a close acquaintance with an English family of the name of Bakewell. During the following winter the friendship deepened. Mr. Bakewell had a pretty daughter, named Lucy, to whom the young naturalist taught drawing, receiving lessons in English in return. The consequences may be imagined. Audubon fell in love with Lucy, and Lucy with Audubon; and on the

8th of April 1808, the well-matched pair were married.

The young couple removed to Louisville, where Audubon commenced trade under favourable auspices; but continued to devote every leisure hour, and many hours that were not leisure, to the study of natural history, and more particularly the pursuit of birds. He entered into partnership with a friend named Rosser, and for awhile the firm prospered, the business being left to the management of Rosser, who was energetic and industrious, and Audubon abandoning himself more and more to an errant and unsettled life. The war with Great Britain in 1812 brought ruin to many American houses, and gave such a shock to the stability of our young firm that they were forced to leave Louisville, and make a fresh start at Hendersonville. Before his departure, however, Audubon made the acquaintance of Wilson, the American ornithologist; an acquaintance which produced no pleasant fruit, but served to stimulate Audubon's zoological enthusiasm.

From Hendersonville, before long, a migration was accomplished to St. Geneviève, the young traders carrying their goods and chattels down the Mississippi—a voyage, in those days, of some

adventure, as Audubon's lively narrative very clearly shows :—

“ Putting our goods—which consisted of three hundred barrels of whisky, sundry dry goods, and powder—on board a keel-boat, my partner, my clerk, and self, departed in a severe snow-storm. The boat was new, stanch, and well-trimmed, and had a cabin in her bow. A long steering oar, made of the trunk of a slender tree, about sixty feet in length, and shaped at its outer extremity like the fin of a dolphin, helped to steer the boat ; while the four oars from the bow impelled her along, when going with the current, about five miles an hour.

“ The storm we set out in continued, and soon covered the ground with a wintry sheet. Our first night on board was dismal indeed ; but the dawn brought us opposite the mouth of the Cumberland River. It was evident that the severe cold had frozen all the neighbouring lakes and lagoons, because thousands of wild waterfowl were flying to the river, and settling themselves on its borders.

“ The third day we entered Cash Creek. Here we learned that the Mississippi was covered with floating ice of a thickness dangerous to the safety

of our craft, and indeed that it was impossible to ascend the river against it.

“The creek was full of water, was crowded with wild birds, and was plentifully supplied with fish. The large sycamores, and the bare branches of the trees that fringed the creek, were favourite resorts of parroquets, which came at night to roost in their hollow trunks. An agreeable circumstance was an encampment of about fifty families of Shawnee Indians, attracted to the spot by the mast of the forest, which brought together herds of deer, and many bears and raccoons.”

Here they were forced to tarry for some days. Rosser chafed at the delay, for he was anxious to resume his trading operations; but to his volatile partner it was an occasion of unmixed delight. He could indulge his nomadic tastes to the utmost. He went duck hunting, and bear hunting, and wild-swan hunting: he fraternized with the Indians, he gathered flowers and plants, and he contemplated the varying phases of the novel scene around him.

At last the Indians broke up their encampment, and the whites then thought it time also to make a move. Dropping down the creek, they entered the Mississippi, whose mighty cur-

rent they found flowing three miles an hour, and bringing down with it huge shoals of ice, against which it seemed hopeless to attempt the ascent of the river. The crew landed, however, and towed the boat up, accomplishing a distance of seven miles only in a day. At night they camped on the bank, lighting fires, cooking supper, and sleeping soundly—as men *do* sleep when conscious of having done their duty.

The second day they made ten miles. Two more days of difficult labour followed, and then the severity of the weather forced them to go into winter quarters. They were frozen in.

The reader will understand that Audubon during their winter encampment was never in want of occupation. His gun and his sketch-book were resources of which he never grew weary. He informs us that he passed six weeks very pleasantly, investigating the habits of wild deer, bears, cougars, raccoons, and turkeys, and many other animals, and drawing more or less by the side of the great camp-fire every day. No one, he asserts, can form an idea of what a good fire is, who has not seen a camp-fire in the woods of America. Imagine four or five ash-trees, three feet in diameter and sixty feet in length,

cut and piled up, with all their limbs and branches, ten feet high, and then fire kindled on the top with brush and dry leaves. Under cover of its canopy of smoke the adventurers slept at night ; and round its glorious blaze they gathered every day, to narrate the adventures of their past lives, or while away the time with boisterous songs.

But a startling catastrophe suddenly took place. The ice began to break, and, as it always does, without warning. The boat of our voyagers was in great danger of being cut to pieces by the ice-floes, or swamped by their pressure. Roused from their slumbers, they rushed down to the bank. What a spectacle awaited them ! The ice split with thunderous reports like the volleys of heavy guns ; and as the water had suddenly risen from an overflow of the Ohio, the two streams rushed together with such violence that the congealed mass was rent into large fragments, some of which, by the force of the collision, rose almost on end, to fall again with a terrible crash, as the wounded whale, when in the agonies of death, springs up with furious force, and again plunges into the “yeasty billows.”

This strange catastrophe, however, opened up the channel of the Mississippi, and Audubon and

his friend resumed their voyage, finally arriving at St. Geneviève in safety.

Audubon, however, was not long in discovering that it was not an agreeable residence for the son of a French gentleman. Its population were mostly low-bred French Canadians, in whose company he took no pleasure. He wearied to be back at Hendersonville beside his young wife. Rosser, his partner, found a wife at Geneviève, and to him Audubon sold his share of the business. Then he purchased a horse, bade adieu to his friend, and started homeward across the prairies. On this bold journey he met with the adventure in the log-cabin which we have already described.

At Hendersonville he once more started in business, this time with his brother-in-law for partner; he embarked all the remainder of his fortune in the speculation. But, with characteristic restlessness, he went hunting in Kentucky, instead of attending to his interests, and he soon learned that all his money had been swallowed up in profitless undertakings.

At this juncture his father died, leaving him an estate in France—of which, however, he took no steps to obtain possession; and seventeen thousand dollars in the hands of a merchant in

Richmond, Virginia, for which he did not apply until the merchant died insolvent! Audubon, not the less, preserved his usual equanimity. Gathering together a few hundred dollars, he purchased some goods in Louisville, and returned to business in Hendersonville. At first he prospered. He purchased land, and a log-cabin, and seemed on the high road to fortune, when he was tempted to erect a steam-mill, which in no long time led to the ruin of all concerned; and once more the naturalist was adrift on the stream of life. No mishaps could quench the man's wonderful buoyancy of spirit; and taking with him his wife and children, his gun, his dog, and his drawings, he returned to Louisville, where he conceived the idea of starting as a portrait draughtsman. For this occupation he was well fitted by his natural tastes and acquired skill. His reputation soon spread over all Kentucky. He was invited to Cincinnati, where he opened a drawing-school, and received the appointment of Curator of the Museum. Once more he began to thrive; and as he had leisure for the prosecution of his favourite studies, there can be no doubt that this period of his life was really happy.

During his rambles in Kentucky he made the

acquaintance of the famous backwoodsman Daniel Boon, of whose wonderful skill as a marksman he relates some interesting proofs.

How shall we follow Audubon through all the wanderings of the next few years ? In 1820, he left Cincinnati in search of fresh fields for his enterprise, and, having accompanied a scientific expedition down the Mississippi, he reached New Orleans. Here he heard of a projected expedition to Mexico, and made the most vigorous but unsuccessful efforts to join it. Meantime, he experienced almost every phase of fortune ; but into whatever depths of penury he sank, his happy spirit and buoyant energy never failed to raise him out of them. If one day he was searching for a patron, by taking whose portrait he might gain a few dollars ; the next he was dining with high dignitaries, and obtaining the most flattering letters of recommendation. Fortune's wheel might turn and turn ; clouds might darken, or sunshine break through a tiny rift ; but this extraordinary man was always the same—full of confidence in himself, eager, restless, enthusiastic, genial, and never bating one jot of heart or hope, however stern a face the world might show him !

## CHAPTER II.

### WANDERINGS.

E next find Audubon bound on a journey to Shipping Port, Kentucky. In the course of it he met with many adventures, and, it is unnecessary to say, added largely to his stores of ornithological knowledge. Returning to New Orleans, he was joined by his wife and sons (1822), where the difficulties of their position increased to such an extent that Mrs. Audubon was obliged to accept a situation. He then betook himself, in search of employment, to Natchez, where he obtained some engagements as a drawing-master. As soon as he found himself doing somewhat better, he sent for his wife, and the family were again reunited—though only for a brief interval. In 1824 we find our erratic genius at Philadelphia, where he made the acquaintance of Prince Canino, son of Lucien Bona-

part, and an excellent ornithologist. He also obtained introductions to Sully the painter, Le Sellur, and other influential persons, who were struck with admiration by the beauty of Audubon's drawings, and strongly advised him to take them to England, where they would not fail to procure for their author a wide and liberal patronage. He now contemplated the production of a great work on American ornithology, and with this object in view hastened to New York—whose publishers, however, gave him but scant encouragement. He was somewhat cheered in these unfortunate circumstances by the good news he received from his wife. By the exercise of her talents she was earning an annual income of three thousand dollars, and with noble affection she placed it at her husband's disposal, that he might complete the *magnum opus* destined to immortalize his name. He was able, therefore, to resolve on the long-meditated voyage to Great Britain, where alone he could hope to obtain the means of publishing on a suitable scale the colossal result of years of labour. He returned accordingly to Bayou Sara, where he took leave of his wife and children, and then journeyed to New Orleans. Here he engaged a passage to Liverpool on board

the ship *Delos*; and on the 19th of May 1826, the undaunted wanderer bade a temporary farewell to the shores of America.

On the voyage he neglected no opportunity of pursuing his favourite study, and the following extract from his journal will show the quickness and accuracy of his observations :—

“ In the Gulf of Mexico our vessel was becalmed for many days, the tedium of which we beguiled by catching fish and watching their habits. Among the others caught we were fortunate in securing several beautiful dolphins. Dolphins move in shoals varying from four or five to twenty or more, hunting in packs in the waters, as wolves pursue their prey on land. The object of their pursuit is generally the flying-fish, now and then the *bonito*; and when nothing better can be had, they will follow the little rudder-fish, and seize it immediately under the stern of the ship. The flying-fishes, after having escaped for awhile by dint of their great velocity, on being again approached by the dolphins emerge from the water, and spreading their broad wing-like fins, sail through the air and disperse in all directions, like a covey of timid partridges before the rapacious falcon. Some pursue a direct course,

others diverge on either side, but in a short time they all drop into their natural element. While they are travelling in the air their keen and hungry pursuer, like a greyhound, follows in their wake, and performing a succession of leaps many feet in extent, rapidly gains upon the quarry, which is often seized just as it falls into the sea. Dolphins manifest a very remarkable sympathy with each other. The moment one of them is hooked, or grained—as sailors technically name their manner of harpooning—those in company make up to it, and remain around until the unfortunate fish is pulled on board, when they generally move off together, seldom biting at anything thrown out to them. This, however, is the case only with the larger individuals, which keep apart from the young, in the same manner as is observed in several species of birds; for when the smaller dolphins are in large shoals they all remain under the bows of the ship, and bite in succession at any sort of line, as if determined to see what has become of their lost companions."

Audubon arrived at Liverpool on the 20th of July 1826. He received a cordial welcome from Roscoe, the historian, and Lord Stanley, and made £100 by the exhibition of his pictures at the

Royal Institution. Thence he removed to Manchester, and from Manchester to Edinburgh, where his romantic appearance and undoubted genius made him one of the most attractive "lions" of the Scottish capital. He was fêted and favoured by peers and baronets, civic dignitaries and men of letters: by the Earl of Elgin and Sir Walter Scott; by Sir William Jardine and Professors Jameson and Lizars, a trio of illustrious naturalists; by Professor Wilson ("Christopher North"), then in the flush of his fame; by Basil Hall, Selby, Dr. Knox, George Combe, and the Earl of Morton. He obtained numerous subscribers to his great work, which he had the satisfaction of seeing put in hand for publication. At conversazioni and dinners, and public and private assemblies, he was overwhelmed with courteous attentions, which his natural vanity—his one foible—made him receive as only a fitting acknowledgment of his superior merit. His admirable qualities of mind and heart, however, were recognized by his Scottish friends, on whom he produced a very favourable impression.

The following sketch of the American ornithologist is borrowed from the lively pages of Professor Wilson's "*Noctes Ambrosianæ*":—

"We were sitting one night lately," say Wilson, "all alone by ourselves, almost unconsciously eying the embers, fire without flame, in the many-visioned grate, but at times aware of the symbols and emblems there beautifully built up of the on-goings of human life, when a knocking, not loud but resolute, came to the front-door. At first we supposed it might be some late home-going knight-errant, from a feast of shells, in a mood between 'malice and true love,' seeking to disquiet the slumbers of old Christopher, in expectation of seeing his nightcap popped out of the window, simulating a scold upon the audacious sleep-breaker. So we benevolently laid back our head on our easy-chair, and pursued our speculations on the state of affairs in general.....

"But the knocking would not leave off; and, listening to its character, we felt assured it came from the fist of a friend. So we gathered up our slippersd feet from the rug, lamp in hand stalked along the lobbies, unchained and unlocked the oak which our faithful night-porter Sommes had sported —and, lo! a figure muffled up in a cloak, and furred like a Russ, advanced familiarly into the hall, extended both hands, bade God bless us, and pronounced, with somewhat of a foreign accent,

the name in which we and the world rejoiced—‘Christopher North !’ We were not slow in returning the hug fraternal, for who was it but the ‘American woodsman’—even Audubon himself, fresh from the Floridas, and breathing of the pure air of far-off Labrador !

“ We do not deny that we saw in him an image of the *Falco Leucocephalus*; for that, looking on his ‘carum caput,’ it answered his own description of that handsome and powerful bird—namely, ‘The general colour of the plumage above is dull hair-brown, the lower parts being deeply brown, broadly margined with grayish-white.’ ”

From Edinburgh, Audubon visited Newcastle, Leeds, York, Shrewsbury, and Manchester, securing a few subscribers of two hundred pounds. Then he went to London, where he secured the powerful patronage of Sir Thomas Lawrence. George IV. honoured him with permission to publish his work under “his particular patronage, approbation, and protection;” and the *magnum opus* itself finally saw the light, receiving, as it deserved to receive, the enthusiastic commendation of every man of taste and lover of natural history. After a short trip to Paris, where he made the ac-

quaintance of Cuvier, he returned to London, enjoying to the uttermost the sunshine of fame and prosperity which had burst upon him, and reaping the reward of his perseverance, energy, and self-devotion.

In May 1829 he returned to the United States, delighted to share his good fortune with his wife and family. He remained at Bayou Sara three months, actively employed in hunting the woods for birds and animals, of which he made drawings for his work, which was still appearing in parts in London. Having made some important additions to his collection, he once more sailed for England, accompanied, this time, by Mrs. Audubon; and together they visited London, Manchester, Lceds, York, Hull, Scarborough, Whitby, Newcastle, and Edinburgh. At the last-named place, he writes in his journal under the date of April 15:—"I have balanced my accounts with the 'Birds of America,' and the whole business is really wonderful: forty thousand dollars have passed through my hands for the completion of the first volume. Who would believe that a lonely individual, who landed in England without a friend in the whole country, and with only sufficient pecuniary means to travel through it as a visitor, could have accom-

plished such a task as this publication ? Who would believe that once, in London, Audubon had only one sovereign left in his pocket, and did not know of a single individual to whom he could apply to borrow another, when he was on the verge of failure in the very beginning of his undertaking ; and above all, who would believe that he extricated himself from all his difficulties, not by borrowing money, but by rising at four o'clock in the morning, working hard all day, and disposing of his pictures at a price which a common labourer would have thought little more than sufficient remuneration for his work ? To give you an idea of my actual difficulties during the publication of my first volume, it will be sufficient to say, that in the four years required to bring that volume before the world, no less than fifty of my subscribers, representing the sum of fifty-six thousand dollars, abandoned me ! And whenever a few withdrew, I was forced to leave London and go to the provinces to obtain others to supply their places, in order to enable me to raise the money to meet the expenses of engraving, colouring, paper, and printing ; and that with all my constant exertions, fatigues, and vexations, I find myself now having but one hundred and thirty

standing names on my list." These, however, represented a sum of £2600.

We have given this extract for the sake of the lesson it conveys. Our young readers may rest assured that, with an energy and a courage and a resolution equal to Audubon's, they will not be less successful than he was in grappling with Fortune, and conquering it. And it is to be observed that Audubon was free from all sordid motives ; he was animated by a genuine love of knowledge ; his devotion to science was sincere. He studied Nature from a desire to learn her secrets and comprehend her beauties, and not because the study might become a means of gaining fame or wealth. It is in this spirit only that we should strive after knowledge ; and she will not be gracious to her worshippers if in any other spirit we approach her shrine.

"To some she is the goddess great:  
To some the milch-cow of the field;  
*Their* wisdom is to calculate  
What butter she will yield!"

Ah, reader, if you are dazzled by the delusive hope of renown or mere worldly prosperity, you will never be a true student, and the golden fruit you so eagerly grasp will turn to ashes on your lips ! There is no merit in self-help, no virtue in resolute

industry, unless its inspiration be pure and lofty ; unless we look beyond this toiling, sinful life to the life hereafter, which shall be crowned with the fulness of eternal glory ! Then, indeed, we shall not quail if dangers threaten, or turn faint at heart if obstacles present themselves ; for looking beyond the transitory present and its trials, we shall confidently expect our reward in the unchanging future.

In 1831 Audubon returned to New York, and shortly afterwards started on an expedition to East Florida, with the view of increasing his ornithological collections, and rendering more complete his work on the "Birds of America." In the course of his wanderings he met with some striking incidents, and it is superfluous to say that he traversed many novel scenes which produced a strong impression on his vivid imagination.

One morning, as he was slowly sailing up the St. John River, he saw a monstrous alligator lying on the shore. Desirous of obtaining him to make an accurate drawing of his head, he landed, and accompanied by his assistant and two of the sailors, cautiously approached. When within a

few yards one of them fired, and sent through his side an ounce ball, which tore open a hole large enough to admit a man's hand. He slowly raised his head, bent himself upwards, opened his huge jaws, swung his tail to and fro, rose on his legs, snorted violently, and fell to the earth. Audubon's assistant, contrary to his instructions, caught hold of the monster's tail, when the alligator, awakening from his trance, crawled with a last effort towards the water, and plunged heavily into it. Had he thought of once flourishing his tremendous weapon, there might have been an end of his assailant's life ; but he fortunately went in peace to his grave, where he was left reposing, as the water was too deep for his body to be easily recovered.

On another occasion, they traversed what is called a pine barren. The country was as level as a floor ; the path through the trees, though narrow, was well beaten, having been trodden by the Seminole Indians for ages ; and now and then a bright rivulet occurred, from which they quenched their thirst, while the magnolias and other flowering plants on its banks relieved the dull uniformity of the woods. When the path divided into two branches, Audubon followed one, while his com-

panion followed the other ; and unless they met again in a short time, one of them would strike across the intervening forest. The sun sank behind a heavy cloud, and the south-eastern breeze springing up, echoed mournfully among the numerous pines. Along the eastern horizon lay a bed of black vapour, which gradually extended over the wide face of the heavens. The air grew hot and oppressive ; a thousand signs foretold the approaching storm. Plato, Audubon's dog, was now their guide, the white spots on his skin being the only objects they could discern in the darkness ; and, as if conscious of his usefulness in this respect, he kept a short way before them on the trail.

Large drops of rain began to fall from the lurid mass overhead ; the darkness around grew thick and impenetrable ; and, to their utter dismay, the dog refused to proceed. Groping with his hands on the ground, Audubon discovered that several trails diverged at the spot where he lay down, and having selected one, the intrepid travellers went on. Vivid arrows of lightning shot across the darkened skies ; the wind increased to a gale ; the rain descended in torrents. On the level ground the water speedily rose until it almost covered their feet ; but still they slowly advanced, con-

fronting the tempest. Here and there a tall pine on fire presented a magnificent spectacle, illuminating the trees all around it, and encircled by a halo of dim light, which was sharply defined against the darkness beyond. At one time they passed through a tangled thicket of low trees, at another crossed a stream swollen by the heavy rains, and again proceeded over the open moorlands. How long they thus groped their way, half lost, Audubon could never tell, but at length the tempest subsided, the clear stars shone forth on the brow of night, the travellers recovered the direct path, and before long arrived at St. Augustine.

Such an experience as this could not tame the indomitable spirit of Audubon. His yearning after knowledge was an enthusiasm which laughed at dangers, and would not recognize difficulties. He was always adding to his stores of information; and of men and manners he knew almost as much as he did of the habits and characteristics of the inhabitants of the bird-world. While travelling through East Florida he made the acquaintance of a colony of "live oakers,"—that is, of men who earned a living by felling the live oak-trees in the distant forests, and disposing of them to shippers and others,—and from one of

these he heard a true story of adventure, so pathetic and of such absorbing interest, that we venture to transfer it to these pages, though our hero does not figure in it.

A "live oaker" employed on the St. John River, in East Florida, left his cabin as usual one morning early, and, with his axe on his shoulder, proceeded towards the swamp where he was wont to ply his trade of felling and squaring the giant trees that afford the most valuable timber for naval architecture and other purposes. At the season fitted for this kind of labour heavy fogs not infrequently cover the country, so as to render it difficult to see further than thirty or forty yards in any direction. The woods, moreover, present very little variety, every tree seeming the mere counterpart of every other; and the grass, where it has not been burned, is so tall that a man of ordinary stature cannot see over it; whence it is necessary for him to proceed with the utmost caution, or he may wander from the ill-defined trail he ought to follow. To increase the difficulty, several trails often meet, in which case it is well the explorer should lie down and wait until the fog clears away. Our "live oaker" had been jogging onwards for several hours, and

became aware that he must have travelled considerably more than the distance between his cabin and the "hammock" which he desired to reach. Great was his alarm when, the fog suddenly dispersing, he found he could not recognize a single object around him. Young, healthy, and active, he imagined that he had walked with more than usual speed, and had passed the place to which he was bound. Turning his back upon the sun, he struck into a different trail. Time passed, and the sun headed his course; he saw it sinking slowly in the purple west; but still all around him wore a novel and mysterious aspect. The huge gray trees stretched their spectral arms over his head; the rank grass rose thickly on every side; not a living creature broke the awful spell of his solitude; all was silent, and the scene seemed like a dull and dreary region in the land of oblivion. The solitary woodsman wandered hither and thither like a forgotten ghost which had passed into the realm of shadows, and as yet had met with none of his kind to cheer him with a word of greeting.

It is difficult to conceive of any position more cruelly perplexing than that of a man "lost in the woods." Every object he sees he fancies at

first to be familiar ; yonder oak, this brawling rill, he is sure he has seen before ; but while his whole mind is bent on searching for additional evidence, for signs which may gradually lead to his extrication, he goes on committing greater errors the further he proceeds. This was the case with the “ live oaker.”

The sun was setting in a glow of fiery splendour, round as an orb of flame, as if to give warning of a sultry Morrow. Myriads of insects emerged into active life, and filled the air with buzzing wings. Each piping frog arose from the muddy pool in which it had lain concealed ; the squirrel withdrew to its hole, the crow to its roost ; and on high, the harsh note of the heron announced that it was winding its melancholy way towards the recesses of some distant swamp. The woods echoed with the shrill cries of the owl, and the night breeze as it swept through the columned aisles of the forest, charged with heavy and chilling dew. Alas ! no moon with silver lamp poured lustre on the desolate scene, and the lost one, sad at heart and dismayed, laid himself down on the cold damp earth. Prayer always soothes and refreshes the soul in its hour of difficulty or peril, and the woodsman now offered up

his devotions to his Father, wished his family a happier night than it was his lot to experience, and with an anxiety which words cannot describe waited for the returning day. Oh, how long, how terribly long was that dull, moonless, solitary night ! With the morning came the usual fogs of those latitudes. The poor wanderer sprang to his feet, and with a sorrowful heart pursued a course which he hoped rather than expected might lead him to some familiar object, some well-known landmark. There was no longer any track to guide him ; and yet, as the sun rose, he calculated the many hours of daylight he had before him, and the further he went, the more rapidly he walked. Vain were all his hopes : the day was spent in fruitless efforts to find a path ; and when night again approached, the terror that had gradually taken possession of his mind, together with the nervous exhaustion resulting from hunger, fatigue, and anxiety, almost maddened him. He flung himself on the ground ; he fed ravenously on the weeds and grass that grew around him. He had lost heart and hope ; his soul was filled with black despair.

“ I knew my situation,” he said, when relating his narrative to Audubon. “ I was fully aware

that unless Almighty God came to my assistance, I must perish in those uninhabited woods. I knew that I had walked more than fifty miles, although I had not met with a brook from which I could quench my thirst, or even allay the burning heat of my parched lips and bloodshot eyes.

“ I knew that if I could not meet with some stream I must die; for my axe was my only weapon, and although deer and bears now and then started within a few yards or even feet of me, not one of them could I kill—and although I was in the midst of abundance, not a mouthful did I expect to procure to satisfy the cravings of my empty stomach.”

Several days seem to have passed of which the lost one could never give an account, and during which he apparently wandered to and fro in a state of semi-consciousness. But one day “ God,” he said, “ must have taken pity on me; for as I ran wildly through those dreadful pine barrens, I met with a tortoise. I gazed upon it with delight and amazement; and although I knew that, were I to follow it undisturbed, it would lead me to some water, my hunger and thirst would not allow me to refrain from satisfying both by eating

its flesh and drinking its blood. With one stroke of my axe the beast was cut in two ; in a few moments I despatched all but the shell. Oh, how much I thanked God, whose kindness had put the tortoise in my way ! I felt greatly renewed. I sat down at the foot of a pine, gazed on the heavens, thought of my poor wife and children, and again and again thanked my God for my life ; for now I felt less distracted in my mind, and more assured that before long I must recover my way, and get back to my home."

The woodsman passed the following night under cover of the tree at whose foot he had enjoyed his refreshing repast. He slept soundly, and at dawn, with fresh heart and hope, resumed his toilsome march. The sun rose brightly, and he followed the direction of his shadow. Still the drear solitude of the woods oppressed him, and despair was again taking possession of his soul, when he observed a raccoon lying among the herbage. What he had done with the turtle he now did with the raccoon, devouring most of it at one meal. Refreshed and reinvigorated, he resumed his wanderings ; first in one direction, then in another ; aimless, uncertain, like a blind man in an unknown country. Day succeeded day,

and week followed week. Now he fed on cabbage-trees, now he satisfied his ravenous appetite with frogs and snakes. Whatever fell in his way was welcome, and seemed savoury.

But daily he grew more and more emaciated ; his strength gave way ; he could hardly crawl ; forty days had elapsed, by his own rude reckoning, when at last he reached the banks of the St. John River. His clothes in tatters, his axe dimmed with rust, his face shrunken and his beard dishevelled, his hair matted, his eyes wild with fever, and his feeble frame reduced to a skeleton, he laid himself down to die.

Strange dreams and wayward visions flitted across his weary brain ; wonderful sights and sounds perplexed and confused him. What is that he hears ? Is his mind wandering ? Is it an imagination ? Surely it is the sound of oars that steals along the waves of the silent stream ! He listens ; all again is still. Hark ! The echoes once more float upon the breeze. He now strains his ear so eagerly that the hum of the tiniest insect could not escape him. It is—it is the measured, cadenced, harmonious beat of oars ; and never has sound more welcome carried hope and consolation to a human heart.

Ere long the joyous murmur of human voices was distinctly audible ; and on his knees the wanderer knelt, bareheaded, in the glowing sunshine, thanking Heaven, as round the headland came a little boat, propelled by vigorous arms. He raised his feeble voice on high in one loud shrill scream of exultation and fear. The rowers paused and looked around. Another but weaker scream,—and they caught sight of him. They turned their prow to the land ; a few lusty strokes, and—the lost one was lost no more !

“ This,” says Audubon, “ is no tale of fiction, but the relation of an actual occurrence, which might be embellished, no doubt, but which is better in the plain garb of truth. The notes by which I recorded it were written in the cabin of the once lost ‘ live oaker,’ about four years after the painful incident occurred. His amiable wife and loving children were present at the recital ; and never shall I forget the tears that flowed from them as they listened to it, albeit it had long been more familiar to them than a tale thrice told. It only remains for me to say that the distance between the cabin and the live oak hammock to which the woodsman was bound scarcely

exceeded eight miles, while the part of the river at which he was found was thirty-eight miles from his house. Calculating his daily wanderings at ten miles, we may well believe that they amounted in all to four hundred. He must therefore have rambled in a circuitous direction, which people generally do in such circumstances. Nothing but the great strength of his constitution and the merciful aid of his Maker could have supported him for so long a time.”

## CHAPTER III.

### LAST YEARS.



E have no space to dwell upon Audubon's visits to New Brunswick, the Bay of Fundy, and Labrador. Though advanced in years, he retained all the fire and energy of early manhood, and his love of Nature had undergone no abatement. In April 1834, with his wife and his son John, he embarked for England; and, nineteen days later, landed at Liverpool. Thence, by way of Birmingham, he repaired to London. Here he resided until the autumn, busily engaged on a new book, and arranging for its publication. Afterwards they removed to Edinburgh, where he hired a house, and spent upwards of eighteen months. Some idea of his amazing industry at this period may be gained from the fact that the introduction to the second volume of his "American Ornitho-

logical Biography,"—a volume containing five hundred and eighty pages of closely printed matter,—is dated December 1st, 1834; and that in just one twelvemonth from that date, the third volume, of six hundred and thirty-eight pages, was published.

In the summer of 1836 we find Audubon again in London. He settled his family in Wimpole Street, Cavendish Square, while he made his preparations to return to America, and undertake an excursion into some of the Southern States, for the purpose of increasing the new varieties of birds for his immortal work.

With his son John he sailed from Portsmouth on the 2nd of August, and five weeks after leaving England came in sight of the well-known green hills of Staten Island. After a short stay in New York, he visited Philadelphia, Boston, and Salem. In November he betook himself to Washington, and was very warmly received by the President, General Jackson. Thence he began his contemplated excursion southward. He spent the winter of 1836-37 in Charleston, occasionally diverging into the interior, or making short trips to the neighbouring sea-islands, and visiting also Savannah and Florida. At the same time he

began the researches, the results of which he gave to the world in his interesting work on the "Quadrupeds of North America."

Early in the spring of 1837 he was occupied in a series of interesting explorations in the Gulf of Mexico. He inspected the coast of America from the mouth of the Mississippi to Galveston Bay, in Texas; examining the habits of the birds of that region, and searching for new species, to furnish materials for the completion of the fourth volume of the "Birds of America." Then he returned to New York, and in the latter part of the summer the indefatigable man sailed for Liverpool. Arriving safely in Edinburgh, he devoted himself with characteristic energy to prepare for the press the last volume but one of his "Ornithological Biography." This occupied him until the autumn of 1838; it was published in the November of that year. The winter was spent in finishing the drawings for the "Birds of America," and in completing the last volume of his "Ornithological Biography," which appeared in May 1838.

In the fall of 1839 he returned to America with his family, and settled at New York, to spend the remainder of his days. In 1843 he

made his final excursion, travelling across the great Western Prairies, and voyaging up the Missouri and Big Sioux River. He had now reached nearly his seventieth year, but he continued to labour with all the fire and diligence of his youth. About 1845, however, his strength began to fail him. The physical and mental energies which had induced so protracted a strain showed symptoms of rapid declension. The ardour which had glowed so steadfastly in the naturalist's heart was going out gradually. Yet, as Mr. Buchanan remarks, there are but few things in his life more interesting and beautiful than the tranquil happiness he enjoyed in the bosom of his family—with his two sons and their children under the same roof—in the short interval between the return from his last earthly expedition and the time when his sight and mind began to grow dim, until mental twilight closed in upon him, before the darkness of death ended all.

After 1846 his intellect entirely failed him; and for the last few years of his life his eye had lost all its brightness, and he had to be led to his daily walks by the hand of a servant. This continued until the Monday before his death. On the morning of that “last day” he declined to

take any breakfast, and was unable to enjoy his usual morning walk. His devoted and affectionate wife, who had been the faithful partner of all his joys and sorrows, and to whom he was indebted for much valuable assistance in his scientific labours, caused him to be put to bed. He lay without any signs of suffering, but refusing to receive any nourishment, until five o'clock on Thursday morning, January 27th, 1851, when his wife observed a deep pallor overspreading his countenance. She immediately summoned the other members of his family. Then, though unable to speak, his eyes, which had so long been nearly quenched, rekindled into their former expressive lustre, as if his soul were conscious that it neared the shore of the Eternal Land. One of the sons remarked, "Minnie, father's eyes have now their natural expression;" and the dying Audubon stretched out his arms, pressed his wife and children's hands within his own, and passed into his rest.

He had led a guileless life, marked by energy, industry, and an intense love of the pure and beautiful; brightened by many virtues, stained by no vices, though somewhat dimmed, it may be, by a few foibles; a life of honest labour and

generous aspiration ; and God, in His mercy, crowned it with a happy death.

Reader, so live that, when the last hour cometh, you may rest in the knowledge of a life not idly spent, and commend yourself, tremblingly yet trustingly, to the loving compassion of a God of infinite love.

As you sow, so shall you reap : the spring is heavy with the good or evil promise of the autumn : if you sow tares, do you expect to gather in a harvest of fine wheat ?





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